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A WOMAN'S MISTAKE

By Julius Chambers

A WALL STREET STORY

Formerly Published Under the Title ON A MARGIN

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A Woman's Mistake

By JULIUS CHAMBERS

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FORMERLY PUBLISHED UNDER THE TITLE

On a Margin

By JULIUS CHAMBERS

AUTHOR OF "A MAD WORLD," "THE DIPLOMACY OF JOURNALISM," ETC.

"This is the Juniper Age"

AUG 26 1896
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On a Margin.

CHAPTER I.

MOOTLA.

Two miles from Cambridge, on the old Boston turnpike, stood a country house of imposing size. A lawn, twenty acres in extent, surrounded the homestead, and behind it were three hundred acres of land under thorough cultivation. The grass plot was a place of beauty. So artfully were the oaks and elms disposed about the grounds that the sod never languished for sunlight, though every corner of the lawn's expanse was under shade at some hour of the day. Along the banks of a never-failing stream, behind this rural picture, towered, high and gracefully, a row of willows —giving name to the property. The house was old and gray. Its stone walls sprouted with moss. A gigantic arterial system of vine-stalks that traversed its sides

enveloped the gables in lustrous verdure during much of the year. Here, at "The Willows," dwelt Cotton Mather, a Boston merchant, who loved his fireside and his country. Tall, broad-shouldered, and of fine presence, his home life indicated that he carried his fifty years with a light heart.

But the unquestionable head of this household was a young girl, occupying an anomalous position between a ward and an adopted daughter to the bachelor merchant. She was frail in figure. Her face was generally pale, though it sometimes became suddenly pink without apparent reason. She possessed eyes of peculiar brightness, that flashed anger or twinkled gentleness with fantastic irregularity. She was very young, bright, vivacious, prompt of comprehension, obedient under her patron's will, though easily angered by trifles, and, when once aroused, repentant or defiant as the impulse served. Her beautiful hands were observed and remembered by all who saw her. They were slender, waxen, almost transparent, and she used them with unconscious grace. It was an idyllic poem to see her hover over a peeping rose-bud, as she struggled with an exaggerated sympathy for Nature that urged her not to pull it.

Whence she came nobody knew save the head of the household. Child though she was, the girl had been discreet enough to foil all covert attempts to trick her of the secret. Curious as was the addition of a young girl to the bachelor merchant's family, which had included only an old housekeeper and a cook, not a breath

of scandal was raised. Cotton Mather stood upon a plane far above calumny.

To friends who merited the confidence, he volunteered the statement that he had accepted the charge under circumstances of peculiar sadness and solemn obligation. The frank and reverent tone in which this information was imparted always caused the conversation to take a new channel.

He stated the facts tersely. Two years before we see her at "The Willows," Cotton Mather had taken the girl, ill-prepared as he was for the care, to his dingy apartment in one of the dullest streets of old Boston. At that time her education was as undeveloped as her figure. But a refined young woman had been secured as governess, and the improvement effected was a subject of daily delight to the bluff merchant. Pupil and teacher became greatly attached to each other. The instructor essayed not to check the impetuosity of the girl's nature, but to direct it in the channels of observation and study. The highly imaginative mental organism of the pupil was turned loose into the green pastures of art. Latent inclinations to volubility of speech were curbed, and her vocabulary was enriched with French verbs, until she read that language of romance with comparative ease. Nothing in the way of instruction was accepted without argument, but once convinced the pupil never forgot.

With the governess the question of the young girl's place in the household never arose. Socially they treated one another as equals, and intellectually the

pupil soon overshadowed the teacher in any attractive branch of study, however new or difficult. But there were others under the merchant's roof with whom the struggle for supremacy was one of brute force against clever fence.

The antique housekeeper had cared for Cotton Mather's rooms and linen for many years. Naturally she expected to exercise a maternal care over the new member of the family, as she believed she did over the man at its head. She was not successful. The ward resented any exhibition of authority by the housekeeper. With Machiavelian keenness she watched an opportunity in which to crush the presumptuous housekeeper at one blow. The chance soon came, and with it the crisis.

Overhearing the woman refer to Mr. Mather as "the old doughface," when giving her matronly instructions to the cook, the strange girl walked up and savagely slapped the housekeeper on the face. The act was so audacious that the humbled woman did not even report it to her employer.

The strange girl captured her guardian's sympathies by the ingenuousness with which she related to him her version of the scene. Doubtless the dethronement of the housekeeper inwardly gratified the merchant.

"She was calling a friend of mine a bad name and I punished her," the young girl explained.

"Indeed!"—in amazement.

"Oh, it will not occur again. She will not repeat the offense."

Mather's first impulse was to severely reprimand his ward. But he did nothing of the kind. Cotton Mather, whose ships had often engaged the pirates of the Yellow Sea (under other sailing-masters) struck his colors without even sounding the call to quarters, and surrendered. From that hour the girl's dominion in that house was uncontested.

The mystery of her presence in the family was equaled by that of her name. This was a philological paradox—Mootla. It was of no consequence that the housekeeper argued with the cook that there was no such a name; that only an imp could have received or a witch bestowed it. That was her only name. She had been christened Martha. Infancy corrupted this into Mattie. In childhood she intoned her name according to a quaint and charming euphony of her own by which it became "Mootla." Thus alone did she speak of herself, and she affected not to hear when otherwise addressed.

Cotton Mather tried to humor her in this whim as in others, but when the price of "No. 6, brown," was dropping so fast as to threaten a panic in the sugar market, or a brig sent out to Rio with a light cargo returned in ballast, he was liable to spells of absentmindedness.

On one of these occasions this novice in raising children was suddenly awakened to a realizing sense of the task he had undertaken. This is what happened:

Cotton Mather one day met his little ward in the drawing-room just before dinner. Thinking it a good

opportunity to engage her in conversation, he addressed her several times, good humoredly, as he walked to and fro across the floor.

"Do you still like the governess, Martha?" he finally said.

"No! You mean, nasty old witch-burner!" she retorted.

Mather stopped as though he had been stricken with palsy. Then he looked toward the speaker in almost imbecile amazement. It was the first time he had ever been reproached for this name of his own selection.

"What—do you s—s—say?" he found voice to ask.

"Why do you tease me then?"

"Tease you?"

"Yes, me," with emphasis.

"How? When?"

"When you speak to me."

"I never call you names."

"You don't call me anything."

"Why, look here, my child——"

"Now you say 'my child.' Are you, then, my father?"

"No—no, indeed," the man said slowly, and with a show of sadness. "Call me Uncle Cotton."

"Well, my name's all I have. I am only Mootla—that or nothing. A fatherless and motherless girl ought to have her own way in some things."

"So she ought, I agree."

"My good Uncle Cotton, you're a dear fellow."

And she put up her pouting mouth for the seal of a

treaty of peace. The same dark eyes that only a moment before were snapping with spiteful fire, beamed with affection. The struggle had been short, sharp and decisive.

As the foster-parent gravely stooped and gave the token of forgiveness, he murmured for the first time: "Wicked little—Mootla. God bless her."

Then he walked the room some time in silence, while the young girl chattered about a picnic to the sea-shore, the distressing hoarseness of her pet mocking-bird, and the annoying habit of the cook's eating all the jam and plum-cake.

Good "Uncle Cotton" struggled no longer, but, as the girl's womanly instinct had foretold, obeyed her suggestions in household matters as implicitly as though he were a clerk in his own office.

Soon after this episode, and chiefly on Mootla's account, he bought "The Willows," where we find the family snugly domiciled.

There was an unmistakable difference between Cotton Mather, head of the house of Mather, Sowers & Company, ship-owners and merchants, Old Wharf Lane, Boston, and this country gentleman at "The Willows." In his business dealings with men or women he was master in any emergency. Women, in all walks of life, he avoided. Of Puritan blood, as his name suggests, he hated witches with pretty faces as sincerely as did his historical namesake.

Cotton Mather had anchored in Boston more than twenty years before we met him. His boyhood had

been passed at a village on the Hudson, known as Crumpet, a snug river-side community perched upon a bluff. Several generations of intermarriages had crystallized the Crumpet people into a frigid social equality. Everybody bowed gravely to everybody else, but there was little hand-shaking and less conviviality in the village. The ancestors of some of the good people had acquired by royal patent the land upon which much of the town now stood; but as only a few of these could support their dignity except by the gradual depletion of their holdings, the sons of trade and toil ultimately effected a lodgment and forced a capitulation. But the first families of Crumpet still figuratively carried their side-arms and maintained much of their haughtiness. Some of the intruders on the royal preserves were families of wealth and influence superior in many ways to the original proprietors.

The best known of these engrafted branches of the Crumpet social tree was the Rawson family. Just prior to the second war with Great Britain, the first Rawson came from New England and purchased from original grantees a large property on the river-side, north of the then scattered hamlet. A large and comfortable house rose on a well-chosen site, into which the family entered as soon as it was ready for occupancy. Whence they came, the Crumpet people hardly inquired, until the Rawsons had become firmly fixed in their position. Then it was too late to ascertain. That they brought much money into the community was undeniable. Myles Standish Rawson was evidently

a man of great wealth, for every year of his life he laid out what was a large income at Crumpet in improving and beautifying his estate. There were boats at his private landing, easily accessible from the lawn that sloped down to the water. In summer he made the house a bower of budding and blossoming plants. The winter-garden, connected with the building by a covered walk, was in its day the largest and best stocked in America.

An incident during the war of 1812–15 must not be overlooked. Rawson was strongly suspected of Tory proclivities. Sentiment rose very high against the family at times. The distrust was largely owing to the undemonstrative character of "the Tough Old Raw" —as he was not infrequently nicknamed. But he went about the village as usual. He drove out every pleasant afternoon, mingled with the people freely, but "cut" every man who did not look him frankly in the eye. It was not until several months after the signing of the Treaty of Ghent that the truth became known. On the recommendation of President Monroe, Congress passed a vote of thanks to Myles Standish Rawson. In this testimonial he was thanked for his large contributions of money toward the organization and equipment of the war vessels that rendered such efficient service for the cause of American liberty.

Of course this discovery produced an instantaneous revulsion of feeling in the community. "The Tough Old Raw" became the passion-flower. He was cheered as he passed along the street, and many men who hated

him worse than before vied with each other in offering him public homage in repulsive quantities. Some conscientious citizens, among whom, it is simple justice to say, were not a few who had been the most inexorable calumniators of the supposed royalist, deemed a frank confession of their long and unjust persecution due to Rawson. They organized a demonstration in his honor. But when the committee waited on that gentleman to acquaint him with its design he promptly and firmly declined to sanction the project. His frigid politeness on that occasion congealed forever the spasmodic and short-lived respect and gratitude which the organizers of the public tribute imagined they felt.

That such would be the case Myles Standish Rawson was far too keen an observer of human nature not to know.

He did not need to be told that the man who thus rejects a tribute bringing more distinction to the givers than honor to the recipient inflicts a mortal wound. If the shrewd old man had cared enough about the incident to express an opinion, he doubtless would have explained in his caustic way that he could not consent to permit his narrow-minded defamers to regain their self-respect so cheaply.

Thereafter he was the most cordially disliked man in the community; and the fact that he accepted a public reception from the Mayor of New York only heightened the local disfavor in which he was held at Crumpet.

The rest of his career was wholly uneventful, though

many years elapsed before his death. He left two grown sons, Richard and Cotton Mather, his wife having long preceded him to the grave. There was much disparity in years between the boys, which in the father's will militated against the younger.

Richard, the first born, had completed his studies at Columbia College. He passed much of his time in the metropolis, and was believed to be thoroughly familiar with his father's vast business interests there. His parent seemingly manifested a partiality by bequeathing Richard the Crumpet homestead and the bulk of the estate. The will contained a characteristic injunction to the elder son to sacredly guard the interests of the younger.

Nobody understood the true reason for the discrimination. The fact was that old Myles Standish Rawson did not entertain as sincere a regard for Richard as for Cotton. The younger boy was quiet, self-reliant, and inclined to industry; while the elder was noisy, flippant and unstable of purpose. Cotton was the old man's type of an heir, but Richard was the elder son. Myles Standish Rawson had always retained an inherited respect for the law of primogeniture, and his latent veneration for the English right inspired the phraseology of his last will and testament. To this inequality of birthright public sentiment erroneously attributed the subsequent separation of the brothers.

Young Cotton Mather disliked study. He went into trade and acquired a knowledge of bookkeeping at the warehouse on the wharf. His dream of life was to

marry the daughter of a respectable Crumpeter, and to pass the rest of his life in peace and comfort. He felt no enmity toward his brother, but rejoiced in Richard's prospect of fame and popularity.

An unexpected event changed the whole course of his life. One day his intended wife, Alice Dean, disappeared. The river was dragged; the country round was scoured in vain.

Weeks afterward the wandering lover encountered the false girl in New York, whither she admitted, in an emotional burst of repentance, having fled with Richard Rawson, the brother who had affected the deepest sympathy.

Heart-broken, young Cotton returned to Crumpet, packed his effects, and left, vowing never to return; he stopped in New York long enough to gather up and convert into money all of his patrimony that was tangible. Thence he went to Boston, and into business cautiously and resolutely. He was soon forgotten at Crumpet, and for many years fancied he had effaced all recollection of it from his memory. So deep and lasting was his detestation for the family name that when of legal age he obtained the consent of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to fling it aside. For all purposes, social and commercial, he shortened his name to Cotton Mather.

The strangest part of this Crumpet mystery, when all is said, was its sequel; for, after an absence of many years, the haughty Alice Dean returned to the village as the wife of a middle-aged and dissolute carpenter.

She brought with her a young child, a girl. The family took a small cottage on the edge of the town, and the carpenter pretended to labor occasionally at his trade. All of the woman's former friends passed her in the street; but the wives, sisters, and daughters of the mill people strove by every means to ingratiate themselves with "Mrs. Alice."

She was a changed woman. Outside of her own house she rarely spoke unless it was to instruct or amuse the bright-eyed child constantly by her side. She resolutely followed the course of her life alone.

A gradual decline in the prosperity of the family was noticeable. The husband became moody; he talked and acted as if weighed down by some secret trouble; his melancholy grew upon him until he died in his shop one day during a fit of delirium in which he killed a fellow-workman. The little girl was present, and saw her father die.

After this calamity the widow's prospects in life became very gloomy; her health was so bad that she could not work to provide food, and when, after a severe struggle with privation she recognized her utter hopelessness, she sent a letter to the only man of whom she had no right to expect mercy, imploring a refuge for her child. She asked nothing for herself.

The charge was willingly accepted by Cotton Mather. Rejecting all offers of personal support, the mother parted from her girl forever. Alone, she sought the oblivion of the county alms-house that she might there secure the solitude that was denied her elsewhere.

CHAPTER II.

THE GAME OF LIFE.

THE secret of Cotton Mather's success in trade was inflexibility of purpose. When he renounced his Crumpet home and name, he concentrated all his energies on the accumulation of money. Beginning as he did with ready resources in cash, twenty years had sufficed to make him rich far beyond his most ardent expectations.

Like his father, Cotton Mather was enthusiastically loyal. He was blindly devoted to all enterprises, private or national, that upheld the interests of the Republic. This ruling idea had more than once brought financial success where disaster was presaged, and, though a heavy loser in several projects into which his patriotism led him, he floated in the mid-channel of the nation's prosperity, and grew rich with the country's development. His policy was a simple one. The controlling interest in one ship attained, a similar ownership in more than fifty others followed by the law of accretion. Next he became a shipper on his own account, and as his vessels increased in number he lengthened their voyages. Thus the flag of his house became known in half the ports of the world—India,

China, and, after Perry's treaty, Japan, yielding bullion to his bank account.

Now that he had personally relinquished the search for the golden fleece to the other members of his house, Cotton Mather tried by every means in his power to make himself happy in this country life.

About this time a very strange incident occurred at "The Willows." The master of one of Mather, Sowers & Company's East India ships, remembering that his principal had retired to a pastoral life, secured at Calcutta, after great difficulty and personal hazard, a remarkable present—a sacred cow. The pretty, sleek animal was safely landed at Boston, and was installed at "The Willows." Early on the day after her arrival, the cream-colored beast was tethered in a shady part of the lawn, and browsed contentedly on the short grass.

Mootla's first knowledge of the animal's arrival was when "good Uncle Cotton" (in the language of their compromise) invited her to walk, and led her to the side of the Indian cow. He told her something, too, about the sacred regard in which the animal was held by the people of India, though the information imparted was probably neither full nor accurate. Mr. Mather, no doubt, repeated, as nearly as his memory served, what he had learned from the ship-captain.

Mootla's curiosity was excited to the highest degree. The governess was appealed to, and before a week had passed every accessible source of information was exhausted. It became the girl's fancy to pass hours on her knees before the sacred beast, as she stood with

solemn complacency and regarded the little devotee from the depths of great brown eyes, suffused with curiosity and interest. On one of these occasions the animal approached more closely, and finally placed her mouth gravely against the forehead of the kneeling neophyte.

Mootla believed herself transformed. Hardly more than a child, she imagined herself a Brahminical vestal —creating the new and holy office that she might serve in it. After "the moment of the blessing," as she described the salutation, she worshiped all Nature in the person and form of the sacred cow.

As her knowledge increased, so did Mootla's fantastic zoolatry. By degrees the girl comprehended the dignity with which Brahmanism has invested the cow. Where she finds full appreciation, no place is forbidden her. She takes rank above many castes of men. Princes may be deposed, but the cow of Hindostan has her altars in a thousand temples for ever, and arrogates to herself the central dignity in a religion with two hundred million believers. When unsentimental Cotton Mather recognized the oddity of his ward's freaks and began a remonstrance, Mootla checked him in an abrupt manner. The episode took this form:

"When will you cease this nonsense?" asked the merchant, taking a risk at war rates, in the hope of re-establishing his lost authority. But the words evoked an unexpected rejoinder.

Mootla gazed at him seriously for a fraction of time, and then retorted:

"What do *you* know about the mystery of Nature?"

"Stuff——"

"Didn't you lose a game of cards to a hog, my good uncle?" she asked, in her most provoking manner.

This sudden reference to a confession which the staid Cotton Mather had once made in her hearing of his abject defeat at a game of euchre by "an educated hog" named "Wicked Ben," covered the shipping merchant with confusion.

He recalled the circumstances perfectly. It was an incident of his active life "on change." He had been put forward one day as the representative of a jolly party of merchants, who had met in the back-room of a fashionable restaurant near the Exchange for the purpose of testing the wonderful talent of the animal. Intent on the frolic, the merchants had drawn lots as to who should be their champion against the hog. The honor had fallen to Cotton Mather. Great care had been taken to prevent collusion between the animal and his keeper, but the defeat of the merchants' champion in a game of euchre had been unequivocal.

After going over all these facts in his mind, Cotton Mather replied:

"True, my dear child. I have done considerable thinking since that day."

"So one might have supposed," was the cynical answer of the girl.

"He who has not been outwitted by a hog," said the merchant, solemnly, "knows little of the mystery of life—for life is a game, at which the swine often win."

"To-morrow will be the festival of the sacred cow, my dear Uncle Cotton. You will join in it, of course?" she said, abruptly diverting the theme to a new channel.

She dwelt with marked emphasis on the hailing sign of the peace covenant entered into on the day of her first triumph over her guardian's alleged strong will.

And, ludicrous as the scene appeared, Cotton Mather formed part of a small group of persons that stood with bared heads while the little priestess fed the cow an offering of salad and sprouts out of the merchant's paper basket. The animal was crowned with a wreath, and her horns were festooned with ribbons. It was a scene of stupendous sanctity. Cotton Mather had treated the idiosyncracies of Mootla lightly prior to this time, but he now began to understand the difficulties of the task he had set for himself.

In desperation he hit upon the thought of sending Mootla to the school of Professor Morton, in a neighboring village. He reconsidered all his ideas about the value of home education, and confessed that he had been pursuing the very course that would increase Mootla's distemper. She needed change of scene and associates. But, when the scheme was proposed to Mootla, she made it a condition precedent that she should live at home, and be driven to and from the school each day.

To these terms the merchant yielded without a word of argument. Arrangements were made to place Mootla in one of the best private schools in the commonwealth.

CHAPTER III.

A BIT OF DELF.

A BOY in his teens was leading an old woman by the hand. His face was earnest and thoughtful, its pallor indicating much weariness of body. But in his eyes shone the warm sympathies of youth—so pure and fresh in hearts unscarred by contact with the world. His head was without covering, for the woman wore his hat. Her hair hung about her neck, unkempt, and prematurely gray. Her eyes were dull and sunken, and at times her face, picture as it was of grief and loneliness, shivered with sudden pangs of pain.

Once the boy staggered and fell from sheer fatigue.

This mishap disclosed a strange bond of unity between the twain. A yard's length of rusty chain linked the woman's ankle with a billet of wood which the boy bore in his arms.

Whither this couple, in the golden and earthy age of life, journeyed neither knew. But all the resplendent radiance of an autumn sunset could not dispel the gloom that gathered in their path. The leaves, of orange hues and red, aimlessly drifted by the light, warm air, arranged themselves on the turf in patterns that rivaled the weaver's handiwork, but these lone

plodders struggled on, unconscious of the forest's loveliness. Alien are Nature's beauties, garish her harmonies of color, when misery makes the meeting-place.

Since morning they had been on the march. The severity of the walk told greatly on the boy, but, child though he was, his energy never flagged. During the long day the woman's heart had sounded all the semitones in the gamut of emotions. Influenced by hope, she gladly hurried the pace ; in moments of despondency she moved with faltering step.

In the fitful glint of fading day these two travelers gained the summit of a hill. The boy, peering ahead down the slope, was listening intently. On the rocky banks of a small stream, whose gurgling voice ascended from below, an anvil could be improvised, thought he, on which to break the woman's fetters ! With this purpose they slowly descended the knoll.

Ever thoughtful of his charge, the young leader saw that her manacled ankle was swollen and bleeding.

They were strangers. She did not know the boy ; he knew not her—they were only fellow-mortals.

Seated at the foot of a tree, the woman vacantly gazed into the distant gloom, while the boy resolutely strove to break the chain on a boulder by the side of the creek.

Undaunted by non-success, forgetting the darkness overhead, in the glow of his youthful heart this boy still plied the blows as the group merged with the shadows and became a part of the night.

A few hours passed.

All the bells of Crumpet were wildly clanging. The warm air of an "Indian summer" night, blowing up from the Hudson, mingled their tones in mad discord. Lights were reappearing in all the houses of the town. Its quiet streets were full of people hurrying to the court-house in response to the midnight summons.

A boy of the village was missing. He was the only child of Richard Rawson, who had gone to the woods nutting early in the day and had not returned. Search parties were organized, the neighboring country was portioned among them, and, on horses and afoot, they set out. A liberal reward, offered by the Rawson family, so stimulated the quest that it was prosecuted through the night.

A party of three workmen employed in one of the river-side factories came upon the missing boy about daybreak in the heart of a large forest tract known as "Staunton's Wood." He was discovered asleep on the turf by the side of Blue Jacket Creek. Near by, at the foot of a tree, sat an old woman, wrinkled and gray. The horse of the leader of the party stumbled over a billet of wood to which was attached a battered chain. Boy and woman awoke and sprang to their feet.

"Why, lad, the whole village is seekin' ye," said a workman.

"Go back and tell my father that I will return as soon as I have found this lady's child for her. I—we are not lost."

"Yes, good sir," began the woman, coming forward.

"It is true. My little girl is gone from me, and I want to see her before I die——"

"Grab-a-root! It's Mrs. Alice," exclaimed one of the search party who hadn't spoken before.

"Only let me see her, good gentlemen," the affrighted woman supplicated. "I ask no more."

The workmen whispered together. One of the party knew that a reward was paid by the overseer of the poor for the return of fugitive paupers. They had bagged two rewards at the same time. The wretched woman read the secret in their hearts. She became almost frantic in her appeals for a longer lease of liberty.

"Anywhere, but not there. Do not send me back to Hopewell," she entreated, in pitiful accents. "I have suffered so much. Let me go forward alone, if the boy must go back. Let me walk, and walk, and walk."

"Where is the girl?" asked one of the men, somewhat affected.

"I can't remember. I gave my girl to somebody. When I missed her I escaped from the farm. But I was recaptured, and I was chained to the floor of my room. After months of probation the staple was drawn, only to be driven into the end of a block of cordwood. This was the wildest liberty."

"Then she fled once more," suggested the boy, to hasten the progress of the story which he had heard in all its details.

"Again, with my girl for a guiding-star, I escaped to the woods one night," continued the woman, hardly noticing the interruption. "For ten days I was free,

though I dragged the log as I ran. Sleeping in the shadows of the forest by day, with this silent, inseparable companion by my side "—here the woman advanced and placed her foot upon the wooden block now severed from her—"I wandered onward by night, hopelessly, aimlessly seeking mercy but never finding it. Starvation forced me to apply at a farm-house for food. There this speechless demon clinging to me disclosed the world's verdict. Mute as it was, it gave the hailing-sign of woe and anguish. The fraternity of man rejected the appeal. I was dragged back, despite my prayers and pleadings, to the squalor and wretchedness I had fled from. Now, men, I am free—doubly free. This boy has saved me, and has piloted me thus far toward my child. I met him at the almshouse-gate yesterday. I told him my griefs. He aided me to liberty at once. Can you, as men, do less?"

"Will you help her?" asked the boy.

"Indeed, we will," the workmen answered, with a significant interchange of glances.

Under renewed hope, the trembling woman permitted the men to place her on one of the horses, and, as the sun began to shine through the trees, the small procession started townward. The route lay past Hopewell House—why so called none can tell.

The building was a two-story brick structure. A few scattered graves were seen in a small and neglected apple-orchard at one side of the gateway. How appropriate this act of placing the potter's-field at the entrance to a pauper's dwelling-place. Despite the pro-

test of her young champion and the delirious struggles of the frantic woman, the runaway was delivered back to the keeper of the poor.

When the boy saw the futility of further remonstrance, he turned to the men and said:

"But for you, cowards, she might have been happy."

The staple was replaced in the floor of Hopewell House, and a few weeks of untold misery brought the sorrows of "Mrs. Alice" to an end. Near the gateway somewhere she was buried.

This incident, to the village mind so commonplace, gives to Walter Rawson the mint-mark of a hero. Worthy point at which to begin the story of his life, for in these years of grace the requisites of a hero are in dispute.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLOT ON THE ESCUTCHEON.

It was a raw and boisterous day in March on which Richard Rawson, son and heir of sturdy Myles Standish Rawson, died at Crumpet of the rheumatic gout. He was not an old man, but the bother of living had worn him out.

Little as the community had cared for the man, the importance of his death upon the interests of the village was not to be overlooked. The surviving members of the household evinced the deepest sorrow, and the local undertaker was instructed to give the dead man a funeral worthy of his race.

The family carriage was sent to meet the boat from New York on the second morning after the decease of Mr. Rawson, and it returned to the house of mourning with two men differing widely in appearance.

The elder of the visitors was Cotton Mather. Though he had been gone so long from Crumpet, there were those at the steamboat-landing who recognized his face; but none spoke, though he had gone away with universal sympathy on his side.

The younger person wore a suit of black broadcloth that did not fit him. His bearing was supercilious.

He was the picture of a man of the world traveling at a reduced rate. It was evident that these mourners arrived together by accident. As a matter of fact, they had met on the boat.

When they alighted at the side veranda, overlooking the water, the family's butler met them, and led the way to the spacious drawing-room where the body of the deceased had been placed. The visitors approached Walter, who stood, with haggard countenance, at the side of the bier.

"Is this Walter?" asked the elder man, half doubtingly, as he scrutinized the face of the fine-looking lad.

"Yes, sir," was the prompt reply.

"I sympathize with you, my dear boy," said the impassible uncle, taking the hand of the youth, who looked him frankly in the eyes.

"Thank you, sir."

"Do you know me?"

"No, sir; I do not think I do."

"I am your father's only brother."

"Mr. Cotton—Mather?" exclaimed Walter, with a trace of doubt or suspicion, quickly withdrawing his hand.

"The same. When did Richard go?"

"Father died, sir, at sunset on Monday," was the slow and respectful rejoinder.

Turning to the companion who had arrived with him, the merchant said:

"You know Walter, Sam?"

"I have seen him at the bank," answered Samuel

Catesberry, cashier of the Limestone Bank, of which the deceased had been president.

The studied formality of his uncle recalled to Walter's mind the only previous occasion on which he had seen him. On one of the rare visits to the city with his father, he had been seated in a window of the president's room at the bank. This man before him, whom he now knew to be Cotton Mather, his uncle, had suddenly entered in response, apparently, to an urgent summons from the chief officer of the bank.

The scene between the two brothers recurred to the boy's mind vividly.

. . . . . .

"The bank must have one hundred thousand dollars before three o'clock," exclaimed Mr. Rawson, in an unnatural, hopeless tone.

"Did you send for me to say this?"

"We must have it," with the firmness of despair.

"Well, borrow it!" The great, broad-shouldered man, pale as marble, turned toward the door, when the bank president clutched him desperately by the arm as he entreated:

"Save us! We can't borrow. You can spare it. Save me——"

"Are you crazy?"

"If the bank fails, as it certainly will, we're beggars —my wife, my boy——"

"Stop! Don't talk to me of wife or child!"

"But you'll help me?"

"No."

"Then our last resource is gone."

And the banker retreated, and sank into his chair aghast.

The stranger turned again to go, took two steps, then stopped, and facing the prostrated man said slowly and with icy formality:

"The bank shall have the money. I yield, because my contempt for its president is of no ordinary kind. I scorn to take advantage of the usual methods to square a deadly injury."

Abject humiliation appeared in every line of the banker's face.

"How can I thank you?"

"You can't! I want plenty of collateral, and the best. Remember *your* word won't answer for its character. I must finger the papers myself."

"But I must express——"

"Less you say the better. Send the securities to the Ocean Bank in half an hour. I shall be there."

Then the stranger vanished.

. . . . . .

The tyrant in this scene, which had haunted his youthful mind like an ever-enduring nightmare, stood revealed before Walter as his uncle.

The visitors ceased speaking together as a tall, closely veiled figure entered the room. The uncontrollable evidences of agitation exhibited by his mother at the sight of her brother-in-law confused Walter still more.

Mrs. Rawson had no difficulty in recognizing the merchant, having been apprised of his presence in the house

by the butler. Indeed it was the widow who had sent him word of his brother's death.

The opportunity to bridge over an awkward situation was seized by the elder visitor. He bowed, and said with dignity:

"We meet, madam, under circumstances of great sorrow."

There was a caution and yet a treaty of peace in that simple sentence as he intoned it. Hardly waiting for the widow's reply, which was inaudible to him, he crossed the social chasm at a bound:

"Sister Mary, I want to present Mr. Catesberry of the bank, who is here as the official representative of the board. My sister, Mrs. Rawson—Mr. Catesberry."

"How kind of you, sir, and how thoughtful of the directors to ask you to come to us in our deep affliction," said the widow, casting aside her veil.

Cotton Mather looked upon the face of his dead brother's wife for the first time. She was a Crumpet woman. Her features were regular, her skin was fair, and her eyes sought his with a keen, searching look that was meant to ruthlessly drag from him the real secret of the family feud. That she knew not the truth the merchant satisfied himself at a glance. He saw that he was in the presence of a woman of sensitive pride, weak resolution—save in great emergencies—and timid personality.

Meanwhile, the cashier was saying:

"The board, madam, desires to convey through me

its deepest sympathy for you, madam—and your family, madam—in your distress, madam. Personally, as an intimate associate of your late husband, madam, I beg to add my condolence to theirs——" Indeed, there is no telling how long Catesberry might have continued to stammer over his speech had not the afflicted lady shown signs of bodily collapse by suddenly sinking into a large chair near her.

"Thanks, many thanks," she murmured. Then, recalled to the presence of the dead, she began without looking at the visitors :

"Poor, dear Richard. This great blow came so suddenly. I saw very little of him during his last sickness, being so ill myself and closely confined to my room; but now that he is gone, now that I have lost him forever—poor Dick!—he appears to have had so many good qualities, to have been so essential to our very existence, that I blame myself for not having appreciated him better." The distressed woman closed the sentence amid sobs.

Cotton Mather was a close observer of the scene. He ended the mental soliloquy in which he had indulged with his own particular pet phrase—"And so it is." What he meant neither his words nor face betrayed.

Mannerisms are natural phenomena, curious and inexplicable. Psychology does not account for these eccentricities of speech.

"You must be careful of your health, sister," he went on to say. "It's a raw morning outside ; very liable to give one a cold. There's considerable malaria about."

"So our family physician said," she rejoined.

Doctor Conway had cautioned the good woman against shock to her nervous system. So strictly had she followed the physician's advice that when her maid ran to say that Mr. Rawson was breathing his last, she took the precaution to send the girl back to the doctor to ask if, in his opinion, the final scene would be particularly harrowing. Richard Rawson had hastened to take advantage of the delay, and died before his wife came. He had such a coward's fear of death that he hated to have anybody see him die.

The two visitors regarded the widow in silence. A conjunction of these men in that room resembled no natural phenomenon so nearly as the temporary association of two erratic stellar bodies that at long and irregular intervals approach each other without meeting.

Samuel Catesberry was not especially schooled in the proprieties of the occasion. Who was he, anyhow? Mr. Mather knew as much about him as anybody, and that was very little. In his favor it was to be said that he had risen in a few years from the position of bookkeeper to that of cashier in one of the largest banks of the American metropolis. Despite his declaration to the widow, he was only slightly acquainted with the deceased bank president. Like the other employés of the institution, he had disliked its chief. His ideas of social propriety were about as clearly defined as his conceptions of integrity. He believed himself honest and hoped to remain so. He reasoned from experience. Observation had taught him the danger of doctoring

ledgers and cashbooks. He was aware that every species of bank irregularity heretofore tried had proved a failure. He was too "practical" a man to be caught doing wrong. Therefore, he was extremely useful, even valuable, in his place, and was likely to remain just that kind of a person to the day of his death, provided no shrewd scoundrel of congenial mind succeeded in mastering his confidence.

So narrow is the path that many men walk between the strictest integrity and that temptation which, if encountered, will certainly lead them to crime.

While Cotton Mather made no special claim to an appreciation of the niceties of the social world, Catesberry could on occasion be at his ease in a drawing-room; but only so long as he was able to control the ever-present impulse to be a snob. He owed his place to Cotton Mather, who had taken his measure several years before, under the following circumstances:

On a very slight business acquaintance, Catesberry had gone to the shipping merchant in his Boston office for a letter of introduction to the now deceased president of the Limestone Bank, in New York, and had, after some delay, secured the following characteristic note:

"RICHARD RAWSON,

President of the Limestone Bank, New York:

"DEAR SIR—This will be handed to you by Samuel Catesberry. He is an experienced bookkeeper, and as honest as is necessary. I think he will suit the directors of the Limestone Bank. He ought to, for he is quite as great a cad as you are. COTTON MATHER."

The bluff Bostonian had dashed the note off while the would-be clerk waited, and, after merely glancing over it to see that the words were correctly spelled, had handed it, unfolded, to Catesberry.

He read it carefully; then, holding the sheet horizontally, he said calmly:

"Sand it, please."

Cotton Mather, who had disliked the young man up to that moment, admitted himself beaten in impudence, and confessed that he "never had seen anything neater in trade" than the nonchalance with which Catesberry shook the extra sand off the page, remarking:

"Many thanks. Couldn't ask anything better. You evidently love me as a brother."

Then he bowed and departed, with the letter of introduction in his pocket.

"Bless my soul," commented the merchant. "I mistook that fellow for a fool."

Catesberry went much further. He actually presented this phenomenal letter, and obtained the coveted desk in the Limestone Bank. Curiously, too—how inexplicable are the freaks of human nature!—Cotton Mather exerted many influences unsuspected by the beneficiary to advance this young man for whom he felt no liking.

This was the extent of their acquaintance prior to meeting on the boat.

The conversation between the widow and brother-in-law was interrupted by the arrival of the rector and a few of the villagers, who had been selected to bear the

pall. Catesberry slipped out of the room, and slowly walked back and forth on the porch, affecting a demureness he certainly did not feel.

The funeral service occurred in the afternoon, and was very brief. After a short prayer with the family, the rector preceded the body to the church, where a large congregation had already assembled.

Walter, attired in deep black, assisted his mother to the family pew, followed at a respectful distance by the dead man's brother, and the official representative of the bank. Still further behind came the family servants.

All being in their places, amid solemn silence throughout the gathering the rector read the sublime service of the Church of England.

At the conclusion, the body was borne down the aisle and to the open grave not far distant in the yard. Not until young Walter was observed standing apart from his uncle, on the brink of the gaping tomb, did the interested villagers learn that Mrs. Rawson, the widow, had been sent home in a condition of complete prostration, attended by her physician and maid.

Samuel Catesberry returned to New York on the night boat, but the elder visitor showed no inclination to accompany him.

He knew of a sacred obligation which his dead brother owed a living creature, and he clung to a hope that it had been recognized. To the end that the family might be reunited, he established friendly relations with the widow. He ministered to her comfort in

every way, disclosing many of the admirable traits of character hidden in his usually gruff exterior. After the funeral he became a different man. The name of the dead was spoken with respect, and he made a sturdy effort to gain Walter's affection.

The second day after the funeral, the will of Richard Rawson was opened in the presence of the family lawyer. Its terms were simple in the extreme Everything real and personal was bequeathed to Walter, with a life interest in the Crumpet estate to the widow, and a fixed income to maintain it. Apparently the will contained no charitable legacies. At the end of the testament, in the handwriting of the devisor, was a codicil setting apart "the sum of $50,000 in trust to his brother, Cotton Mather, alias Rawson, to be applied by him to such use as he might see fit to make of it." The trustee, so designated, was to be exempted from giving any bond or accounting to the court for the disbursement.

On the evening of that day, which was to be his final one at Crumpet, the uncle so far overcame Walter's dislike as to secure his company for a walk along the river.

It was a mild evening, and the twilight being just sufficient to obscure the opposite shore-line of the Hudson, awakened in the senses the effect of looking out upon a dreary inland sea.

Reaching a jutting headland, the elder man sat down and motioned his young companion to a round-topped stone near by.

"Let us rest here, Walter," he began with marked hesitation. "I think I have something to say to you."

A violent struggle was going on in the speaker's brain. Clearly he was either unable to decide on his conduct, or, having resolved, he was not able to justify his course with his conscience.

He had intended to tell Walter the bitter story of his humiliation, but could not begin. After a few minutes' silence, the great broad-shouldered man rose to his full height, seized a large boulder, raised it above his head, and cast it far from him into the murky flood. Then he said abruptly:

"My brother—your father—did me a cruel injury. I had intended to tell you the means he used, but I find that I have buried my wrongs in his grave. I realize to my surprise that I have forgiven him. I had vowed never to see Crumpet again. Now that I am on this shore, every inch of which is sacred to my boyhood, I I want to offer you my sincere friendship."

"I have not asked it, sir," rejoined the young man, almost with rudeness.

The towering form of the man quivered under the rebuke, but he allowed it to pass unnoticed, and continued with an earnestness that was awe-inspiring:

"Walter, I believe in the wrath of Heaven; and though I never have wished it and would prevent it, I feel sure it will seek you out. So far as a human creature may, I would stand between you and the vengeance of an unforgetful Providence."

"But what if I decline?"

"Do you, though ?"

"I neither accept nor reject your offer, sir. I shall wait and see," saying which the young man rose and led the way back toward the house.

A heavy fog lay dark and sombre over the river's tide, so oppressive that not the tiniest wavelet rippled shoreward.

In silence this couple traversed the road up the sloping lawn. Their minds were intently occupied. In Walter's the query was :

" What did he intend to say ?"

In Cotton Mather's a clearly defined doubt took this form :

" Ought I to have spared him ?"

The good-night greetings were soon after said, and the usually clear-headed merchant, taking his candle, sought his bed-chamber in a most preoccupied condidition of mind.

Alone in his old room, the one he had occupied as boy and man, he packed his grip-sack for departure on the following morning. Then he prepared himself for rest.

As he blew out the candle and gathered the cold, clinging linen about his neck, he sighed, and sighing murmured :

" Poor little Mootla—God bless her."

CHAPTER V.

THE BINOMIAL THEOREM.

THE carriage was ordered earlier than usual at "The Willows" one morning. When it came to the door, Cotton Mather appeared, followed by Mootla. She was charmingly dressed, though her skirts were a trifle too short for a girl of her age. This peculiarity of her clothing was characteristic of her, for she ran like a deer about the lawn, climbed trees and fences, and could ride any horse that could be bridled. She had resisted all efforts of her companion, the governess, to embarrass her movements with long petticoats. Every act of hers had some trait of femininity in it, however. She never evinced any disposition to play ball, or marbles, or to whistle. She had no boy playmate to imitate. When she climbed a tree, it was to rock in its topmost branches the hydrocephaletic doll she constantly lugged about. When she vaulted over a fence, it was in her motherly instinct for the welfare of a stray rabbit, chicken, or Guinea-pig. She was thoughtful and constant in her care, and gentle in her treatment, of the wretched doll and sun-blistered cow of Hindoostan. But all these diversions had paled, and she was about to try the school-room as a novelty.

The carriage rolled out along the smooth avenue to

the main road, where the team settled into a dignified trot.

"I think you will find it very pleasant at the professor's school," the good merchant volunteered.

"Shall I tell you the truth?" the girl asked, with an arch expression in her eyes that would have melted an ogre.

"Certainly, my child."

"Well, then, I don't care whether I like it at Morton's or not. I have a purpose in going."

"You have, eh?" exclaimed the man, surprised and interested.

"Yes, indeed."

"And what may it be, pray?"

"Please don't ask me until I've looked the place over. Then I'll tell you."

"The professor is very clever," suggested Mr. Mather, feeling his way carefully forward into the conversation.

"So I am told."

"He encourages his pupils to study by many ingenious and happy ways peculiarly his own."

"Pshaw! I hate study. I'm not going there to be 'a bump on a log.'"

"What?"

"'A benchy'—a book browser."

"Why do you go, then?"

"Ah! that's the secret, my dear, sweet man," she said, realizing that she was cornered. "That's what you are not to ask me."

"Very well, Mootla," answered the merchant, drawing a cigar and lighting it.

He then relapsed into a mental calculation of the future course of the cotton market.

His reverie was interrupted when the carriage turned into the grounds of the Morton Institute of Social and Polite Learning.

Miss Mootla was introduced to the genial old professor, who had a slight acquaintance with Cotton Mather. The real head of the school, Mrs. Morton, was summoned, and after a somewhat lengthy conversation between that lady and the prospective pupil, Mootla was enrolled. Cotton Mather drew his check for a year's tuition in advance, and, after a few words with the good gray professor, joined Mootla in the carriage. The new pupil was to begin her attendance on the following morning.

"Was everything satisfactory ?" asked the merchant, as the carriage rolled homeward. He was in excellent spirits, and half inclined to joke with his young ward.

"Perfectly," she rejoined. "They are there."

"Who are there ?"

"The Wharton girls. They have bored me for months about this school," said Mootla, frankly. "I wanted to be sure they were on the roll."

"Why, my child, you have not begun to doubt humanity already ?"

"Oh ! you innocent man. Don't you know that all girls love to lie ? It's part of their nature."

"Indeed, I didn't know it."

"Then it's because you've never been a girl."

"Suppose we admit that. What about the Wharton girls?" he asked, almost afraid of some new pitfall.

"They talk of nothing but this place. 'Professor Morton does not agree with Dr. Silliman; he believes thus, and so,' the big, scrawny girl chattered a few days ago at Radney's," and she imitated the unfortunate lisp of the young woman to a nicety. "Then the other pigeon-toed fright generally chimes in, 'The Professor is right, you know.'"

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Worse. They carry it into religion; even quote the Bible, and say, 'Professor Morton partly agrees with Paul, or Matthew,' for instance. I want to learn something, so I can crush them the next time they talk so."

"You evidently don't love the Wharton girls?"

"No, indeed; and I'll smash them."

"And this is your ambition?"

"It's my present purpose in life."

Then the occupants of the carriage relapsed into silence.

The title of the school was its trade-mark. This institution at South Andiron had been patronized for many years by families in the neighborhood of Boston, who could pay the exorbitant rates which guaranteed its social exclusiveness. Its pupils included day and resident scholars, and while the standard of the curriculum was not higher than at other schools, the Morton Institute deservedly ranked well for the training its

pupils received in the usages of good society, and the delicate forms of culture that group themselves under the head of *belles lettres.* On the door-plate, instead of the name of the establishment, was graven the maxim of its chief. The words were: "Study is everything." But the good professor often explained that he interpreted the noun in the sense of "observation," rather than in the abstract sense.

The building was a large, and probably the best preserved specimen of Queen Anne architecture then standing in this country. It had originally been the homestead of a large estate, now completely disintegrated. Interiorly, it differed in almost every respect from the traditional young ladies' seminary. The century that had passed since the house was built had wiped out all traces of its original embellishments and decorations, but the repairs had been regularly and judiciously made, so that the restorations carefully preserved the harmony of the whole structure. The small property on which this grand old house stood at this time was held in trust by a Boston corporation, and so obliging was the administration that the rent barely paid the taxes and cost of repairs.

Professor Hector Morton, Ph. D., who presided over this school, was a man of broad culture, considerable dignity and of charming manners. In stature, he was tall and well shaped. His hair and beard were white, and kept closely cropped. At first sight he might have been taken for an East India officer. Methodical to the verge of eccentricity, he never lost his temper far

enough to condemn the absence of the same trait in others. Although a diligent student of science, he was exceedingly fond of the social life existing under his roof.

His wife was a prim little body many years his junior. She fully recognized the necessity of her presence to give propriety to the Doctor's position as an instructor of young ladies. In her way she certainly was invaluable. Her name found place in the catalogue as "Professor of Household Art," and her management of the kitchen and bakehouse had tended quite as much as the learning of Doctor Morton to create the splendid reputation which the school possessed throughout New England. Her breakfasts, dinners and teas were exhibitions of liberality, as well as of culinary art. In the history of the place not a scholar had ever written home in complaint of the food.

Girls at boarding-schools are always hungry. Mrs. Morton knew this, admitted it, and provided plenty to eat. In some respects she was fastidiously neat, but her cleanliness was generally of the sensible, practical kind. She visited the kitchen early each morning, examined personally the pots, kettles and roasting spits. She never tolerated a slovenly servant, and insisted upon the utmost care and skill from the waiting-maids in placing the dishes upon the table. Bells were never rung in the building. A maid knocked at each door when the hour for rising, or dining, or supping arrived. The family party assembled in the drawing-room, and no one went to dinner until all were present or had

sent excuses. Mrs. Morton's duties gave her much real pleasure. She performed them with all the grace and dignity of a matron charged with the social future of a housefull of daughters.

It had been intimated that Doctor Morton had a theory of his own regarding education. His was an attractive as well as practical idea, and its feasibility was evidenced in the many years of thorough trial it had had. In his opinion a school should present the closest possible similarity to the home of thoroughly refined and educated people—men and women who lived abreast of the age.

Every social courtesy of the family was observed at the Institute. From the moment of matriculation to the hour of graduation the young lady pupils were treated precisely as guests on a visit to the house of a friend. To Dr. Morton the rostrum, the form, and the recitation by class were abominations. He abolished them, and, indeed, every other conventionality of the traditional school. The drawing-room, where the pupils generally assembled when the weather was not warm enough to meet in the yard, or on one of the wide porches, was a model of taste. Its easy chairs and sofas were not placed in the same positions two days in succession, and the young ladies, as they entered, took seats wherever they pleased. A rich Axminster carpet covered the floor. The walls, repainted every season, were that year of a pearl-gray tint, with heavy maroon freize and a bottom selvedge of the same color. They were beautified by etchings and photogravures of many famous pictures

of the day. This discrimination in favor of faithful reproductions of the work of master hands as against equally cheap "originals" by unknown artists indicated the theory on which the school was founded. Nothing inferior was permitted to find place among the appointments of the institution. These pictures were frequently changed, so that the eyes of the seminarians never grew tired. In one end of the apartment stood a Parian marble cast of the Milo Venus, and at the other a similar copy of the Belvidere Apollo. So firmly was a love of art for art's sake implanted in that house, that prudery never entered.

When the teacher appeared among the scholars, he or she took any chair that was vacant. Especial care was taken to eradicate from the pupil the declamatory style of recitation. The conversation was carried on naturally, and all present were at liberty to take part when others were not interrupted thereby. Public rebuke or censure was never administered, emulation being wholly relied on as the spur to intellectual activity. When a pupil answered incorrectly the instructor simply disagreed with her and stated the other side, offering suggestions that often encouraged original research.

Life at the Morton Institute of Social and Polite Learning passed as smoothly as summer weather. It was an earthly state in which heart and body were constantly revitalized. The example of the active little woman who acted as Professor of Household Art sufficed to prevent indolence in any form.

The good old professor was the only person under that roof who did not enjoy peace of mind. He had what his wife described as "a persistent and vexatious intellectual relish for experiment and invention." When the house was quiet he always retired to a work-room in the rear of his study, and light generally streamed from its windows until long after midnight. In that place the professor had fitted up a lathe, and the noise of filing sometimes kept Mrs. Morton awake. Beyond this she was wholly uninformed regarding the task at which her husband was employed, for when she besought him to share the secret of his labors with her, he always answered seriously :

"Be patient, my dear; I'm solving a Binomial Theorem."

Then the gentle woman lost her temper and left his presence abruptly.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT PRETTIEST OF SONGS.

AMONG the most exclusive of the original Crumpet families was the Vreelands. Its people had been Crumpeters for more than a hundred years, and it was affirmed that an ancestor of the line came to New Amsterdam with Governor Stuyvesant.

The living head of the family still had his homestead at Crumpet, but he had a city house in New York also, to which he carried his wife, children and servants every winter. In the metropolis Peter Vreeland was widely known in society. He had a box at the opera, was booked for every first night at each of the fashionable theatres, and drove one of the handsomest teams seen during the sleighing season on Broadway or the King's Bridge road.

The jealous Crumpeters still claimed the Vreelands as part of their community. Villagers are generally avaricious. They hold on to what they once possess of local renown or wealthy people. They lament the migration of any member of their community who reduces the circulating medium. But they are equally as unforgiving toward any man who has spent his early life among them only to make new social alliances in his days of wealth and renown.

The Vreelands dated their line far back of the Rawsons. They even spoke of them as new comers. No two families could have been less alike than these. Both were large land-owners; both were wealthy. But there the similarity ended. The Rawsons, father and son, had been tradesmen, and though Richard Rawson had attained the presidency of a city bank, he continued to manage the half dozen business enterprises with which his name was connected. He was the largest shoe manufacturer in that State, having extensive shops at Cohoes, Crumpet and Poughkeepsie. He was special partner in one of the greatest dress goods houses on Worth Street, and in a leather firm in the Swamp. His name did not appear among the directors of a single benevolent institution. Charity with him began at home and ended there.

Peter Vreeland despised trade. His principal reason for the feeling was not so much family pride as uniform ill luck in every commercial transaction, outside of real estate purchases, into which he had entered. So long as he continued to reinvest his rents in city lots he rarely saw his values depreciate; but the moment he ceased to buy real property he bought experience. His family was one of the very few among the original Crumpeters that never had parted with a single square foot of his possessions. His agents in the City of New York gathered rents on more than one thousand dwellings and shops. He subscribed to every charity; not because it made him happier to give the money or he cared for the object aided, but because he wanted to

show his contempt for a few dollars. He made small loans to his friends for the same reason.

As may be imagined, therefore, the coming of the Vreelands to Crumpet every spring was an event of much local importance. A delay of one week in its return made the small tradespeople nervous and exacting with their perennial customers.

There were several children in the family, but only one of these concerns this story. She was the youngest, the child of old age—Violet. She had been born at Crumpet sixteen years before we first see her, and had always been referred to as "the little country girl." Walter Rawson could not have told when he first knew her. They had met as children at every birthday party given during each summer season, and his claims, as her protector and companion, never had been disputed by any of their playmates. Every winter they were separated—only to be reunited when the grass was green and the sun was warm. From early youth the winters had been bleaker and the summers brighter to them than to most children.

Only the merest bowing acquaintance existed between the Rawson and the Vreeland families. The local prestige of the Rawsons, however, was such that the childish intimacy could not be objectionable to any girl's mother in Crumpet. The two families, nevertheless, affected to be oblivious as to the sociability between the boy and girl.

Such was not the case with Violet's mother. She had carefully informed herself regarding the Rawson

estates. Genial, even-tempered Peter Vreeland frankly confessed to his wife that he respected his neighbor, because of the beautiful site the Rawson mansion occupied. It was the worship of money. There is no title to wealth like that which the possession of real property gives, and in the eyes of Father Vreeland the broad acres of the Rawson domain nullified all the tattle that floated about the village regarding the occasional scantiness of ready money in the Rawson household. It was known that Walter had inherited everything belonging to the estate, and Mr. Vreeland was far too sensible a person not to comprehend that this fact would render the young man welcome in any household in Crumpet.

It has of late years become quite the fashion to cast ridicule at youthful love and sentiment. This is often a mistake. It certainly was in the case of Walter and Violet. The mutual delight in each other's company, as children, had grown into ardent devotion. Whether, as a young girl, Violet was wholly unsuspicious of the tender sympathy which Walter manifested for her, Heaven—where alone women are understood—will reveal. Her simplicity and artlessness had not been changed by her city life. Her enjoyment of the hours and days passed with Walter was unmistakable. They kissed each other at meeting and parting with a *naïveté* that disarmed ridicule. It had been their custom for years. As moves the current of a meadow brook, unruffled but always onward, had glided those unreckoned days of awakening love. And this is the passion of

youth that has no formal recognition among adult humanity!

It was in the middle of May. The afternoon boat from New York was overdue, and when it was sighted rounding the bend in the river below the village, nearly the entire community had assembled at or near the landing. It was the day on which the Vreelands returned to Crumpet for the season. Walter Rawson sprang aboard the steamer to welcome Violet, whom he had already recognized standing on the upper deck. The Vreeland family received him with courteous formality; but Violet, being the centre of so many eyes, could only return the warm pressure of his hand.

Mr. and Mrs. Vreeland drove up the hill to the homestead in the family carriage awaiting their arrival; but Walter and Violet preferred to make their way in the same direction more slowly on foot. Walter told her, in a few brief sentences, of his joy at her return to Crumpet, and Violet as frankly confessed her happiness at rejoining him. He told her of the long and dreary winter, of the ice-boats on the river, of the strike among his cobblers, of a smash upon the railway. While he rattled on she watched him, hearing little of his story, caring nothing for the ice-boats, ignorant of the wrongs of cobblers, heedless of the terrors of the rail. Her thoughts were busy. Never doubting that he loved her, she turned at nearly every step, and gazed into his manly face with girlish rapture.

When he spoke about the future, his were words of earnestness. First, of himself. The winter had been passed in diligent preparation, with a tutor's help, for etrance to Harvard the coming autumn. Far away, he would often write her. He hoped to rejoin her here at Crumpet every summer. This, to her, was a theme of interest. Not a syllable escaped her, not a promise of the future but was treasured in her heart.

The young lovers made the road to the Vreeland mansion as long as possible, and separated with reluctance at the door.

Whatever may have been his intentions when they parted, Walter could not keep away from the girl he loved. He re-entered the grounds about the homestead after dusk, rang the door-bell, and asked for Violet. Her mother received him, and offered some excuses. A young girl needed rest after such a journey.

Walter stated his case with considerable firmness for so young a man. With more frankness than he could have been capable of had he been older, he pictured the desolation of the village when Violet was away, and the happiness her return inspired.

"The dear girl can rest all day to-morrow," he began.

When this point in the colloquy was reached, Violet came bounding down the stairs and into the room. Walter rose quickly, and she checked herself almost within his embrace. Blushing slightly she held out her hands, and Walter seized them. Without a trace of awkwardness, Walter took Violet impulsively in his

arms and kissed her. Then he remembered that Mrs. Vreeland was in the room. He was doubly sure of it, because she coughed and beat her fan impatiently against her knuckles. The act was so bold, so defiant, that the mother was secretly delighted with the young man, though she tried very hard to frown. Violet was first to recover her self-possession. This open recognition of Walter's claims made her courageous. Before Mrs. Vreeland had found her voice, Violet asked permission to walk with Walter about the grounds; and, as if insubordination had run riot, she seized her hat and hurried out of the door. Walter lost no time in joining her, and, watched by the matron through the open windows, the young lovers strolled away into the moonlight, arm in arm.

Mrs. Vreeland sighed as she realized the import of what had just occurred before her eyes. Already Violet loved another better than her mother.

"Do you really miss me during your winters in the city?" Walter asked, tightening his pressure on the arm which was linked within his own.

"I certainly should were it not for that mysterious institution called the United States mail. I bless it every time your greeting comes."

They walked slowly, for they had so little to say and so much to think about. Walter noted every change of tone in Violet's voice, and where the trees were thickest and the moonlight scarcest he held her closest, that she might not be afraid. Finally he burst out in the rapturous words;

"You are the prettiest thing in this world."

"I'm glad you think so, Walter," was her answer.

"Sweeter, prettier, too, when you blush."

"But I'm not blushing."

"You did a minute ago."

"Well—every girl blushes when kissed in her mother's presence."

"Why should she? Our mothers have all been kissed."

"But they are dreadfully in the way when a girl has a lover—the best of them."

"Still you're not angry with me for what I did?" and he moved a trifle closer that he might not fail to hear her reply.

"No, indeed," she exclaimed, her heart beating so that every nerve in her body thrilled with joy. "It was the proudest moment of my life."

"Bless you for that," exclaimed Walter. "Forty mothers couldn't have stopped me."

Violet's was a simple heart. She knew nothing about "destiny," never had heard the word "fate," but saw life only as it unrolled itself before her narrow and imperfect vision.

The same bell on the court-house that years before had been rung to call the villagers from their beds to search for him, was striking some hour when Walter brought Violet back to the front porch. In the light of the hall lamp she looked more beautiful than she had ever appeared to Walter's eyes.

They bade each other "good-night," but Violet

stood at the open door and watched Walter's retreating figure until it could no longer be separated from the gloom. The memory of each other kept their hearts warm that night.

What a pretty song is youth!

CHAPTER VII.

THE INSTINCT OF TRADE.

A PART of New York did not grow cosmopolitan with the rest of the city. Its small tradesmen have been for half a century conservative and cautious. "Enterprise" they decried because it was so often synonymous with "failure." Bankruptcy was to their minds the unpardonable offense. A trace of superstition also existed among them. They shunned, as accursed, a "stand" in which disaster had overtaken a shopkeeper. On its door-posts gleamed the insignia of financial death, and the mark, invisible to the world at large, was carefully pointed out by the father to the son who was to succeed him.

Recall the region bordering the North River to and including Greenwich Street, and stretching from the great city market northward to Harrison Street. Save that a few large wholesale grocers and tobacconists have located among the petty shopkeepers, the section is much as it has been for three generations. But the new-comers are a foreign population, ignored even to this day. The natives and their descendants cling like barnacles to their original freeholds.

For the accommodation of this class the Limestone Bank had been founded, and the scrupulous integrity of

its officers had established it in the confidence of the most suspicious and mercenary community that the sun shines on. The fact that its officers were rarely men of popularity outside the neighborhood increased the feeling of security among the depositors. For them to be satisfied was enough.

The prejudices and superstitions of the locality have been mentioned. An interesting example may be cited. It was conceded, for instance, that an eating-house (the word "restaurant" has never been engrafted there) could not "live" at Greenwich and Fulton Streets. However much these shrewd people may have differed among themselves regarding politics, or religion, or the keeping of the odd half cent in retail trade, on this one point perfect harmony of belief existed.

They reasoned from experience, and stated their premises with all the accuracy of the founder of that school of logicians. Experience had grown with years. Failure after failure had occurred in this locality. In some cases the shops had begun buoyantly, in others hopelessness had been confessed from the start, but the climax had always been the same. Of late years there seemed to have arisen a passion to feed the people of the neighborhood. With some it certainly was a dream, an infatuation—just as the unattainable often is.

An honest fellow named Anderson devoted every dollar bequeathed him by a sturdy parent to the self-sacrificing undertaking. But, beginning as proprietor, he ended by becoming head waiter to his successor, who took the place for debt. Less theoretical and

fully cautioned as to his task, Warnap, the assignee, lowered the moral tone of the business by adding a bar, reduced the prices of his dishes and the quality of his food; but in a few months his notes went to protest. These obligations were held by persons in other parts of the city, for still another bond of freemasonry existed here. However much the tradesmen cheated their customers or undersold each other, no credit was accorded "to the man at the corner." The dairyman was the only person who took any chances, and he "johnnied" the milk in the expectation that he would lose a week's bill when the crash came.

Thus had local history vindicated itself until the mere appearance of a stranger before the closed doors of the disastrous "stand" evoked nods of distrust between one tradesman and another. The house had been closed several months, for the proprietor had eaten strychnine on his last chop, broiled over his last bucket of coals.

The sensation may be imagined when, one spring morning, a pleasant-featured man of middle age was seen inspecting the place. A murmur of suspicion at once ran through the street. The tradespeople, emerging from behind their counters, stood in their doors to look him in the face. His appearance was reassuring, and not a little sympathy was expressed for the new comer when it was known that he was both a stranger to the city and the locality. Everybody, even to the house agent who had the premises to rent, pitied the man.

The stranger apparently cared not for his neighbors' curiosity. He was evidently a cautious man. He examined the exterior of the building from the edge of the sidewalk ; he ascended to the upper floors, and even to the roof; he descended and critically calculated the capacity of the cellar. The poverty of the fittings in the restaurant did not seem an object of particular interest. Indeed, it was known before nightfall that he had said to the clerk, who had shown him over the building, "Many changes must be made."

Mr. William Gilroy (that was the stranger's name) made his bow to the neighborhood ; he walked up to the front window and tore down the placard : "TO LET."

Naturally enough Gilroy's stability was distrusted. The carpenter, who was summoned on the following day to refit the building, called in several assistants and finished the job with the greatest despatch in order that he might ask for his money while the new proprietor's purse was full. To the journeyman's surprise his account was paid promptly, although he had charged double the usual price in the fear of having to take a large balance in instalments.

The painter across the thoroughfare (for Gilroy believed in utilizing the mechanics of his neighborhood) gave the interior of the chop-house a new coating of paint, and was paid before it dried.

These facts, once well authenticated, were gratifying and inspired confidence.

Within a few days the most enterprising butcher in

the neighborhood called to pay his respects, and finished by asking if he might not execute the orders of the establishment for meat. The offer was accepted, but coupled with the particular injunction that "bills must be rendered every Saturday."

Such was the magic of these words that they were soon known to every tradesman on the street, and Gilroy's fame and credit rose in proportion.

The house was opened in a style that caused all his neighbors to marvel. Prices were reasonable—even low; everything was good, well served, and the business throve from the first day. Expenses had no terror for the new and enterprising proprietor.

And now, as to the man himself. Gilroy was exceedingly companionable. He made friends even faster than he appeared to be making money, and the directors of the Limestone Bank (owning the building Gilroy occupied) were delighted that they had secured a tenant financially safe and practical in his management. Gilroy even became intimate with the cashier of the bank, a very capable man named Samuel Catesberry.

Every Sunday morning found Gilroy at the neighboring church. The minister bowed to him, and the wardens gave him a smile of friendly recognition—he always placed money on the plate. He was not one of those persons who to-day put a trade dollar in the contribution box, which passes for a hundred cents with the Lord, but is good only for eighty-five with their fellow-men. He often gave gold—gold that rang and glittered.

The improvements in the house continued. So poorly was the cellar arranged for storing away vegetables that Gilroy called in a carpenter, whose shop was near by, and had two strong partitions built entirely across the cellar. When this work was completed the narrowness of the cavity formed between the two walls suggested to the proprietor its conversion into an ice bin ; and, as a matter of fact, on the following day he ordered the sawdust in which the cooling substance was to be packed.

The building around the corner, on Fulton street, the rear of which abutted on the one occupied by the restaurant, contained a liquor saloon on the ground floor, a billiard room on the second, and a dancing academy on the third story. This place became very offensive to Mr. Gilroy. So, after some delay, he secured the unexpired term of the tenant's lease and closed up "the den of iniquity."

This act of Mr. Gilroy was very satisfactory to the respectable neighbors. The bank officials were delighted, for, by this act, a growing fear that they had entertained regarding their sporting neighbors of the bar and the billiard-room was banished. The name of Gilroy, in a few short months, became a tower of strength, and the trustees slept more soundly now that his holdings enfolded their property—for the bank building was the corner one. In all his dealings Gilroy acted honorably, and fully deserved a title bestowed by his familiars—"Sanguine Billy."

CHAPTER VIII.

MORTON'S CO-EFFICENT.

A WHOLE book might readily be written of that summer in Walter's boyhood at Crumpet. He met Violet nearly every day, and so ingratiated himself with her parents that he was invited to join them in a coaching tour through the Catskills.

When the Autumn came, Walter began his preparations for leaving home. He fully realized the importance of the step he was about to take. He foresaw that it meant farewell to Crumpet and to the idyllic life he had led among its people. His destination had been settled for more than a year, and his preparations for the entrance examinations at Harvard College were ample. His father's education had been completed in New York, but Walter, practically his own master, had chosen the older institution at Cambridge. The chief pang he felt at going away from Crumpet arose from a recognition of the lonely life he foresaw his widowed mother would lead.

Walter's last day in his native village was devoted to taking leave of everybody whom he respected. Late in the afternoon he visited the shop of a carpenter on the brow of the bluff overlooking the river. Honest old Solomon Adam was found pushing a plane, just as he

had been doing since Walter's earliest recollection. Youth and age parted in tears. Thence Walter descended the hill to the round house and shook the hard hand of John Bowcher, an engineer, who had often taken him short trips on the railroad in the cab of his locomotive. This man's words were warm and comforting, for though he had passed into middle life, he was unconscious of the approach of age, and had not awakened to the ever-present admonition of the old that the grave awaits them. In his heart, Bowcher was quite as young as Walter Rawson; so they parted with their thoughts centered on meeting again.

The new student from Crumpet appeared at Cambridge, bright and happy as a homesick man could be. He was only one of two hundred young candidates among whom he was in no wise prominent. He awaited the decision of the oracle with less anxiety than many others, and was not surprised to learn that he had been gazetted a full grade Freshman. Walter was not the youngest in his class, having turned eighteen before he began his university career; but he had the advantage of thorough preparation, and as a result, the end of the first term found him holding a reasonably high rank among his fellows.

In the same floor of his dormitory dwelt an upper classman, between whom and Walter an acquaintance soon sprang up. The frankness, manliness, and independence of character which Jack Burnaby displayed made him universally respected. He was the son of one of the greatest men New York has produced; a man

who, though he amassed a splendid fortune, left his indelible impress on the nineteenth century. He developed in the brief space of twenty years one of the most successful commercial enterprises in the new world. He lifted the daily newspaper out of the rut of a political tender and dilletante profession to the higher plane of independent mercantile supremacy. He added a dignity to the press of the United States that it never had known, when he propounded his now familiar apothegm :

"The greatest newspaper is the one most independent, most trusted, most profitable, widest read, and soonest forgotten."

With his active advent into journalism, the press ceased to be a means of subsistence for broken-down professional men and persons who had failed in trade. It required, thereafter, the keenest ability to keep abreast or lead in the competition which grew with the art of making a newspaper.

It is not of this commanding achievement of the great Burnaby that we wish to speak in this place, but of the good man's strong paternal instinct—(blessings on the paternal instinct !) He had attained success long after middle life, when ambition has cooled, and when the true man loves life for his children's sake. Burnaby had only one object for living longer; namely, Jack. The son was about through with his studies, and expected soon to succeed to his father's fame and fortune.

Young Burnaby was all fire and dash. He was passionate and quick to resent a slight. Born to a name

that was a household word throughout the land, he had more vanity than his friend Rawson, but less ambition. Rivals they could not be considered, because of Burnaby's seniority in class rank; but young Rawson felt that he should one day have to confront this brilliant companion of his when he entered upon active life in the metropolis of the new world, where Burnaby's position was already an assured and commanding one by birth. They became in time close friends, and as they possessed ample incomes, enjoyed college life as thoroughly as possible.

After some thought, Walter one day sent a note to his uncle's business address in Boston, acquainting him with his presence at Harvard. The next mail brought an invitation to the young student to pass the following Sunday at "The Willows." Mr. Mather drove into Cambridge for his nephew in his own carriage, and as they returned along the hard, macadamized road leading to the merchant's country house, Walter was astonished to find that his relative lived only a few miles from his dormitory. Until he had learned that the merchant went to Boston from a railway station on another line nearer his home, Walter could not understand why they had not encountered one another before.

The distance was soon traversed behind the handsome team of bays, and the visitor saw for the first time the stately mansion and smooth, green lawn at "The Willows." Entering the broad hallway, the two men were met by a tall, dark-eyed young lady. The

visitor had only time to observe that she was dressed in simple yet perfect taste, before his uncle said :

"This is my little Mootla."

No further introduction was given ; but it was enough. She knew who he was, and Walter bowed low in an almost boyish manner. He was surprised, and in a fog of doubt. He had never heard his mother speak of this girl, and he knew that his uncle was unmarried. Walter looked at Mootla carefully. She was not little any longer, and the use of that adjective by his relative meant nothing, except that there had been a time in which she was " his little Mootla."

Her face was uncommonly fair, and the contrasting blackness of her eyes and hair gave her a strangely attractive, though at times weird, appearance. The mouth was small, with lips slightly pouting, and her cheeks dimpled when she smiled. In her favorite pose the shoulders were thrown back and the fingers of her narrow, tapering hands interlocked behind her neck. This seemingly awkward attitude was in her one of unconscious grace, and effectively displayed the suppleness of her arms, the elbows becoming a casque-like protection to the shapely head. To gauge her intellectuality it was necessary to know her—as we shall.

Walter was charmed most of all with her off-hand welcome. Her perfect self-possession never suggested the slightest degree of rudeness. She delighted in argument for controversy's sake. There was a frankness about her speech that won respect. She was not ashamed to say " I do not know." She never hazarded

an opinion without some tangible evidence before her. On a theme that was agreeable very little sufficed to arouse her quick and impetuous mental activity, when she would discourse in a charming vocabulary on art, religion, science, or even politics.

As mistress of the house, Mootla saw that Walter's room was put in order, and having gathered a handfull of flowers, awaited his appearance on a shady corner of the porch. During the afternoon they strolled together about the grounds. Being joined by the master of the house, this scholastic novice retailed some bits of college gossip that highly amused the sedate merchant. The dinner was a dainty affair, served in the brightest end of the great, sun-lit dining-room, on a round table that the three divided between them. When Walter left, at dusk of evening, to be driven back to his dormitory, Mootla ran after the carriage to the gate, like a girl of nine rather than nineteen.

During the months that followed, Walter dined nearly every Sunday at "The Willows," and grew sincerely fond of his merchant-uncle. He found him a man of noble impulses, stability of character, and, greatest of all, a pardoning patriotism that justified every act of his countrymen in international affairs, however absurd and preposterous. This incongruity and unfairness appeared attractive, because inspired by such a zealous pride of nativity.

Mootla often drove Walter for miles along the road in her pony-phæton. On such occasions her tongue would run at a surprising rate. She had read all the

current French novels, and in conversation dashed boldly into criticism—literary and social.

On one of these drives they passed "The Morton Institution of Social and Polite Learning," and although Mootla had not given the place a thought since she left it, she turned her pony's head into the gate. During the time that has intervened since we parted company with him, Professor Morton applied himself, with the same assiduity, to solving "the theorem." But of late he had lacked one element vitally necessary to the demonstration—only a vulgar fraction, to be sure, but highly essential.

Professor Morton needed money.

From a positive and determinate quantity his funds had been eliminated gradually to x, and now stood at minus nothing. As generally happens with inventors and theorists, this unfortunate entanglement of the formulæ occurred at the critical hour in which triumphant success seemed certain. "The theorem" had been worked out to a solution, but he lacked the means to take out the patents securing his property from vandalism. Indeed, the situation was even worse than that; for, unknown to his wife, he had already borrowed large sums of money, which had been expended on his "idea."

Yes, Professor Hector Morton really had an idea. It was this:

He thought it possible to transmit the human voice by wire from one point to another. Of late, many times at night, he had been summoned by his anxious wife to leave his work and seek the rest he needed.

When the command came through the receiver which he held to his ear, the words of the good woman were as the summons of an angel, because they carried conviction to his mind that what could be understood by him could be heard by others.

Simplicity was the charm of his invention. He understood the principles of the electric telegraph. The soft iron bar, he knew, was only temporarily magnetic, while the current was passing through the wire surrounding it. A steel bar, he discovered, not only retained its magnetism, but became, in turn, a source of electricity. An induced current could, he found, be sent through a wire from one magnet to another at the opposite end. Suspending a soft iron plate before the end of a magnetized steel bar, it appeared that a magneto-electric current was induced whenever the plate was brought into, or almost into, contact with the magnet ; and, strangest of all, it simultaneously affected a like iron plate fixed in the same way at the other terminus of a wire. The detection of the existence of this induced electric thrill, or shudder, was Morton's actual starting-point. He had gone over all of Helmholtz's exhaustive experiments in the analyzation of composite sounds ; he had studied the resonator and the human ear ; but the accidental finding of this nervous thrill of sympathy between one magnet and another was the key to his great secret. Several small machines had been completed, two of which he used to connect his workshop and his sleeping-room.

The marvelous toys worked !

He stood on the threshold of success, of worldly immortality, of wealth; but in that moment disaster seemed inevitable, because his funds had given out, while the expensive formalities of securing his property by letters patent were yet to be undertaken.

It was on one of these afternoons of deep despondency that the pony-phæton was descried coming up the road. When it had drawn up beside the door, a bright-eyed young man sprang out and gayly assisted the lady who drove to alight. Mrs. Morton, recognizing her former pupil, received Mootla in the hall. Walter was soon introduced to the Professor and his wife.

It is a sad truth that in that institution Mootla was more than a recollection. She was even held up as a frightful example, a terrible tradition, because the only enduring monument of her fame had been a rough-and-tumble quarrel with one of the Wharton sisters—the unfortunate girl who had a lisp in her voice, which Mootla always imitated in her presence. This "disgraceful escapade" which had given the Mather girl more inward satisfaction than her two years of polite training, had demoralized the school for weeks, and had eventually resulted in the departure of "the female firebrand," as Mrs. Morton styled Mootla.

The easy and sociable manner of the old Professor pleased Walter Rawson much, and it was only a matter of twenty minutes or so before they visited the workshop to inspect the invention.

The machine was shown to Walter. He tried it, and could plainly hear the voice of the professor speaking

over the wire from a box that was fastened to a tree in a distant part of the garden. With a look of sorrow that impressed Walter deeply, the good man told of his zeal, his enthusiasm, his years of labor and nights of sleeplessness. Finally he broke down completely when he confessed that he was wholly without means to go further.

Walter was deeply sympathetic in his nature in those days; but he distrusted the old man because of the imparting of such a confidence to a stranger. Young as he was, he saw the ridiculous side of the Professor's conduct.

The real explanation of Morton's burst of confidence is doubtless to be found in the fact that he was in a mental condition verging on despair. The attention which Walter had given to his general conversation; the interest the young man had shown when it drifted unconsciously into a channel that led toward the Professor's scientific dream, had perhaps encouraged the enfeebled inventor, and he had thirsted for a draught of human sympathy, warm and spontaneous, from a youthful heart. There is no reason to think he hoped for anything more. He longed for a confidant, and made one of Walter, probably before he intended.

Walter left him with a feeling of real sympathy and awakening affection, promising to return again. The old Professor seemed younger than when his visitor entered, and it even looked as if Mootla had in a measure re-established herself in the good opinion of the "Professor of Household Art." The matron kissed her on

the forehead when she took her leave, and the old couple stood in the door as the phæton bearing the young people moved off.

Walter returned to his studies, but the vision of Professor Morton haunted him continually. He wrote to his guardian to ascertain if he had any available funds at his disposal, and finding that he had a few thousand dollars, he visited the old Professor again, unknown to his uncle or Mootla. He carefully inspected the instrument, took it apart, and put it together again. Satisfied of its genuineness as an invention, Walter concluded the visit by giving the Professor a check for three thousand dollars and taking his receipt for the money, which was so drawn as to guarantee him an interest in the invention. The joy of the professor knew no bounds. He embraced Walter, and called him his savior. It must not be thought that young Rawson's act was wholly a benevolent one. He already had considerable business capacity. He had the taint of commercial speculation in his blood, and was willing to venture some money in what he foresaw would prove a fabulously remunerative enterprise, if the machine performed what it promised.

The subsequent career of Professor Morton is a matter of contemporaneous scientific record. He patented his invention in all the countries of the world. He was harassed by infringements, by malicious prosecutions, by false friends. When others failed him again, Walter Rawson came to his aid until he had furnished eight thousand dollars. A company was finally

organized, and Walter was given a quarter-interest for the money he had advanced. He took the certificates of stock home with him at the end of the college year and put them in the old safe at the Crumpet mansion. Then the invention slumbered, and for some time was forgotten by the scientific world. When it reappeared it was in a blaze of gold and glory.

CHAPTER IX.

A WOMAN'S MISTAKE.

GILROY had apparently established a trade. He had many warm friends. But he had also enemies—at least he had one enemy ; and that, too, without any fault of his own.

Across Greenwich street from the chophouse was a "dry goods" dealer, whose shop was as largely stocked as any on the thoroughfare. This draper lived over his place of trade, and the presiding head of his household was his daughter, Maria Pruden.

This lady of uncertain age was a careful student of the ceaseless tide of faces that flowed up and down along the street, and for many of the persons she had the bitterest dislikes. Miss Pruden "dispised" one woman because she stopped so long before a show window. No less did this female censor "abominate" another neighbor, who did not stop at all.

One afternoon, Miss Pruden fancied that a young woman delighted to linger about the front of Gilroy's chop-house, in order to get a glimpse of the proprietor. At first she only hated the woman ; then she recognized the fact that she herself had long felt for the suave Gilroy acute sentiments of tender regard. This admiration, once self-confessed, soon ripened into affection—

so rapid is the growth of a love that is nursed by a jealous heart. From that moment Miss Maria regarded every woman, young or old, who passed the restaurant of the genial Gilroy with feelings of disrespect.

This habit of keeping "her sanguine William" under loving surveillance continued until the bright July afternoon in which this chapter opens. So agreeable was the work to Miss Pruden, that it had become part of her existence. She had reasoned herself into the belief that her love would one day be requited in some mysterious fashion—if not by Gilroy, at least by some other man. Under this self-imposed weight of loving care, she had grown sympathetic—had become more womanly.

One day, however, a crushing disclosure occurred, and her tender though ripe heart lay torn and bleeding. As she sat at her usual post of observation this afternoon, a carriage, having a large trunk behind it, was driven up to the door of Gilroy's restaurant, and from it a woman alighted. The arrival was in the most public manner, and every inhabitant of the neighborhood marked the event. Gilroy himself stepped to the edge of the sidewalk, assisted the lady to alight, and opened the door in the hallway leading to the apartments above. Ignorant of his admirer's gaze—or even of her existence—Gilroy committed the unpardonable sin in the female decalogue. He displayed unmistakable marks of affection for another woman.

Therefore, he had now an enemy.

Within the week that followed this arrival at the home of Gilroy, the lady's presence there was considered in all possible aspects by the watching woman, and no explanation could be found. Had Mr. Gilroy known what a careful record was kept of his conduct, he would doubtless have taken an early opportunity to seek out his neighbor and explain the true state of affairs. His conduct could not have been more upright, for his daily life was integrity itself. The presumption was fair, therefore, that the lady was either his sister or wife. But which? That was a vital question. Miss Pruden rang the hall-door two days later, and left a card. The visit was never returned.

Gilroy must have known too well to require telling that, as the first successful manager of the Limestone eating-house, he was an object of much solicitude. With Miss Pruden the motive now became one of insanely jealous curiosity. Within two weeks after the stranger's arrival, although the lady had not been seen during the interval, Miss Pruden in vain exhausted every effort to ascertain the relations existing between the two inmates of the house. So the weeks glided by, and summer came to an end, bringing neither satisfaction to the waiting woman nor disaster to the industrious Gilroy.

Among the friends that Gilroy made, and was really devoted to, was Mr. Catesberry, of the Limestone Bank. In those days bank cashiers did not arrogate to themselves a higher social plane than that occupied by an intelligent and honest shop-keeper.

As for Gilroy, he made a careful psychological study of Catesberry, and before three months he had formed a very clear-cut opinion of that young man's conscience and morality. He had estimated the cashier's "price" to a vulgar fraction. More than that, he had ascertained, by careful inquiry and a judicious visit to the cashier's house on a Sunday afternoon, that his friend was living far beyond his income. He had learned that Catesberry's wife had brought him neither fortune nor influence. Therefore, by a very simple process of deductive reasoning, he knew almost to a certainty that Catesberry's accounts were "crooked."

Mr. Gilroy made it an act of pleasure to meet his friend Catesberry, whenever it was possible to do so away from the bank. He knew that Catesberry was fond of wine, and when they had a dinner together, as was often the case, Gilroy was liberality itself.

"A good fellow," said Gilroy, on one of these occasions, "is he who always keeps his friend's glass full."

"Then, old top, you are the prince of good fellows," rejoined Catesberry.

One afternoon, on one of their visits to a roadside tavern above Central Park, where they had stopped for a bite of supper, Catesberry so far forgot his usual discretion as to confide in Gilroy, and to admit that he was anxious to "make a raise" to meet an approaching obligation—a sum of money, he explained, that he had borrowed to invest in a speculation that had proved unfortunate.

"Why not borrow some more money and settle the first debt?" suggested Gilroy.

"The advice of a sage," said Catesberry, with half a sneer. "But how is that to be done, pray?"

"Borrow it where you got the first loan," whispered Gilroy, with a Mephistophelian smirk.

"What!" exclaimed Catesberry, setting down his glass, pale and cold.

"Certainly; it's always easier to raise money from people having confidence in one," explained Gilroy, lightly, affecting not to notice his companion's agitation.

"I wonder if they would stand another loan?"

"How can they help themselves?"

"Well, it's auditing day the first of next month," said Catesberry. "Something must be done."

"Then it's all the more important to do as I suggest," insinuated Gilroy, now thoroughly sure of his man.

And thus the danger of the hour was tided over, Catesberry going deeper and deeper into the dangerous waters of embezzlement. The name of the Limestone Bank was not mentioned, but the two friends understood each other perfectly. Gilroy was cautious and discreet; he was also as "sanguine" of his complete mastery of the cashier as were his neighbors of his success at the chop-house.

One crime generally leads to another; and so, by gradual steps, Catesberry's accounts became so involved that during one of their drives together he threw off the mask to his friend Gilroy, and begged his

advice as to a means out of what he termed "an indiscretion."

This was just the condition in which Gilroy had hoped to find him. He at first chided him for his conduct, his bad faith to his employers, expressed regret that Catesberry had not come to him for a loan instead of taking it from the bank, and much more of the same kind of talk. He said not one word too much, however, but ended in this wise:

"My dear boy, you are in too far for me to help you out. I haven't money enough. There is only one way, and that is straight and easy. It is this: Have your bank robbed!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Catesberry, starting as if he had been struck. "That's criminal; that would send me to the penitentiary if detected."

"Yes, you're right. But you must not forget that in the eye of the law you are already a candidate for Sing Sing. It is a crime, I admit; but you are already a criminal."

"Good God! It hadn't occurred to me before. It didn't strike me——"

"Then it ought to strike you very clearly now," said Gilroy, in a tone of friendly admonition. "I fully realized it or I shouldn't have proposed so desperate a remedy. It can be done without——"

"That's the point, Gilroy. *Can* it be done without great danger of detection?"

"Easily enough, as you will see," explained Gilroy, letting the lines fall on his horses' backs as they slowly

climbed the hill on the old Westchester road back of Tremont.

"But how? Damn it, don't beat about the bush any more."

"Well, you must 'give away' the combination of the safe."

"That cannot be done; that would expose me at once," exclaimed the cashier.

"Not at all; you lack experience. You haven't a night watchman in the bank, have you? No. Then you must employ one. It is very hard to get a bank robbed without a night watchman."

"This is dreadful business, Billy," said Catesberry, pale but now resolute.

"It may be possible to do the job without the aid of the night watchman," said Gilroy, thoughtfully.

"I hope so; but it all seems a desperate remedy."

"Cases like yours require heroic treatment. Nothing but the 'jimmy' or the 'combination' can pull you through, Sam."

"Still, the whole thing seems so risky, worse than going on as I am."

"How much are your accounts short?" asked Gilroy, in the same matter-of-fact way that he would have inquired whether a customer liked his eggs boiled hard or soft.

"Eighty-three thousand dollars."

"Then your case is more critical than I thought. That amount must involve a great deal of crooked figuring, eh?"

"No; it is confined to five accounts," said Catesberry.

"Well, suppose any one of those five customers come in to-morrow and want their accounts closed, where will you be?"

"Where will I be? Well——"

"You'll be in the Tombs within two hours. Don't you see?"

"Yes; alas I do."

"A batch of experts will be put on your books, and in a few days the full extent of your embezzlement will be known."

"True."

"Then I simply get back to where I began. You must straighten out every one of these accounts. Get your books clean and then have the bank robbed. I will help you with advice, or in any way in my power. I don't want to see a clever fellow like you go to jail, if I can prevent it."

"You're a good friend, Billy; but I still fear your scheme is too tremendous for me."

"There's no other way out," was the solemn rejoinder.

"Granting that; how can it be done?"

Gilroy was silent a moment; and then, as if he had not heard his companion's question, he asked:

"How much cash have you in the vaults?"

"About three hundred thousand dollars."

"That's too bad," mused Gilroy.

"What's the matter?"

"The amount is not large enough. Is there no way by which you could get some more there?"

"The bonds of the Boston and Broadaxe Railway and Canal Company have been called, and will be paid at our bank after Thanksgiving Day. Now, the half million cash will be in the vault on November 27th, don't you see, because the 28th is a holiday."

"That's the idea!" exclaimed the obliging Gilroy. "It simplifies the whole matter. There'll be no trouble in getting the job done for that sum. Is the vault iron-lined?"

"No; it is of block stone. It was built before the days of iron-lined vaults."

"I thought so. Without being able to count on the watchman, we shall have to try some other means to save you. The safe inside the vault won't give us any trouble."

"Still, Billy, it seems like a big undertaking. Tell me more about it."

"No; the less you know the better. You are to have share and share alike with a few men I shall find to undertake this job. They will never know that such a man as you lives, and, of course, neither you nor I will ever be suspected. I tell you, Sam, I'll do anything to serve a friend when he's in a tight place—such as you're in."

"Very well, then; go ahead, and Satan befriend us all," said the cashier, with a sudden effort, as he saw in the evening sky cloud-pictures of towers and high walls with heavy gates that slowly opened as he approached.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE NANTASKET CLIFF.

Were I to trust my senses, very soon
They'd tell me of *a* woman in the moon.
—*La Fontaine's Fables, VII, xviii, 34-35.*

THE summer vacation passed far too rapidly for Walter amid the shady walks of Crumpet and in the company of the girl he loved. Violet had improved greatly. Her most charming characteristic in his eyes was her inordinate vanity, because he believed her the prettiest, loveliest woman who ever lived.

When he returned to Cambridge, study had little charm for him. He longed for home and Violet. The weather, too, continued so warm that he could not settle down to work. The hotels at the shore were still open, and he decided on Saturday afternoon to pass Sunday at Nantasket.

He reached Boston as soon as a train could take him there, and, by fast driving, caught the last boat. It was quite crowded with people going to some of the intermediate points, and Walter ensconced himself in a corner on the lower deck that he might enjoy a long smoke.

To his surprise, as he left the boat at Nantasket landing he espied Cotton Mather and Mootla among the passen-

gers. Their greeting was exceedingly cordial, and both chided him for not acquainting them of his return. Cotton Mather inquired respectfully as to his mother's health, and Mootla pinched his arm to ask how "the country girls at Crumpet" welcomed him. The three rode up to the hotel together in one of the mammoth four-wheeled omnibuses called "barges."

Cotton Mather was first out of the "barge," and hastened into the clerk's desk to secure rooms, leaving Mootla in Walter's care. They had barely time to seat themselves on the veranda before the merchant appeared, and, patting Mootla on the shoulder, said

"Run up to your room, now; that's a good girl, and get ready for supper. You've the same number you had last time—right at the head of the stairs."

"Are you hungry?" she asked him.

"As a bear."

"Then I shall not be a minute," and away she darted.

She was as good as her word, explaining as she reappeared:

"I took a glance at the glass, and I know I look as well as any other woman about here," casting her eyes around the main hall and ladies' parlor, into which she could readily look. Turning, she seized Walter by the coat-sleeve, and, as she removed her hat with her disengaged hand, gave the order:

"Come on."

The procession moved toward the supper-room.

This large apartment was well filled, and it was im-

possible to seat the three together, Walter being compelled by the force of circumstances to occupy a chair at the other end of the table from his uncle and Mootla.

A remark by a guest recalled the fact that a partial eclipse of the moon would occur that evening. Many of the visitors had made this phenomenon the pretext for spending the night at the shore.

Supper ended, Mootla ran upstairs to her room to put on a heavier dress, saying that she would join Walter on the bluff in a few minutes.

Cotton Mather soon encountered several acquaintances from Boston, and settled himself on the veranda for a sociable evening. He relied upon Walter to entertain Mootla, and had not the slightest anxiety about her. So completely did he trust her, that she was absolutely her own mistress.

Walter awaited Mootla's return with mixed delight and curiosity. The last time they had met they had almost quarreled. He did not want that to happen again, and had thought out a line of policy which he was anxious to put to practical test. He was naturally conservative ; she more inclined to argue than to accept the opinions of others. Humility, in her mind, meant blind subservience. One who allowed her to wholly shape the current of conversation soon found himself so entangled in her web that he dared not disagree. She gradually assumed imperious command, and her subordinates had to surrender the helm or be thrown ignominiously out of the boat.

But Walter hoped to save his pride, and to prevent a catastrophe. His idea was to treat the case with a counter irritant; in short, to pursue a course of antagonism from the first moment.

This theory was not a bad one. Our loquacious friends, if permitted, will soon convince us of our ignorance on all subjects embraced within the wide range between shoe-leather and logic. The disdain of the wise is always preferable to their pity.

In his own mind Walter had not a very settled conviction that the policy would work. How difficult to think when one is really in a quandary. He lit a fresh cigar, and from the porch studied the chromatic effects of the rising moon—seen floating far below on the sombre surface of the sea. In this vague and thoughtless mood he was interrupted by the cheerful voice of Mootla:

"You are a patient friend, at least, Walter. I have been very slow."

"Indeed you have. But you are forgiven, my dear 'cousin,' now that you are here," was the young man's rejoinder.

Mootla looked at him out of the corners of her eyes, fully recognizing the change in his nature, but said, no less impetuously, looking seaward:

"How beautiful! Let us go out on the cliff and admire it."

"I shall try, for your sake; but it'll require an effort," saying which Walter hastened to offer his arm.

They soon clambered out upon the edge of the

great rock where stands the Atlantic Hotel, and were seated close together on the heavy rug which Walter had brought with him. At first Mootla chattered away about the surpassing grandeur of the sea, and the commanding beauties of the place. Walter was on his guard. He carefully avoided being drawn into any analytical comparisons between Nantasket and Newport, or Cape May—estopping controversy by the bold dictum that all criticism was dogmatic ; that pleasure had not been reduced to an exact art. Indeed the violent and incomprehensible twists which he gave to the conversation revealed him, from time to time, as a terrorist in politics, an apologist for regicide, a radical Calvinist, as opposed to Theodore Parker, and, finally, a Mohammedan when Mootla's Eastern theology was sprung upon him.

Mootla was surprised and perplexed. Walter was almost vain-glorious. So carried away was he by the mental revenge which he was taking on his dogmatic companion that he actually meditated a verbal goad for the Sacred Cow of the Brahmins.

"How do matters go at Cambridge, Walter ?" asked Mootla, starting the conversation in a new channel.

"Only tolerably," he rejoined, between gasps occasioned by persistent effort to entice smoke through the constricted folds of a formidable seaside cigar. "The fact is, I am wretchedly unhappy."

"Unhappy ?" and she laughed in a dry, cynical way that sounded strangely to her companion. "And why, pray ?"

"I'm sick of the drudgery of scholarship."

"But you're not a scholar yet," she said, in a provoking manner.

"I know it," was his quick retort. "But I've already learned that he is not necessarily an idiot who calls a covered wagon 'a stage' instead of 'a barge'—as you Bostonians do."

"There you go again. I surrender to-night, Walter, because I am in the conciliatory mood. What under Heaven makes you sad?"

How could he tell her when he didn't know himself?

Both were silent for several minutes. Among the rocks below them the gurgling wash of the sea sported in dreary solitude with the ferns and jelly-fish; and along the far-reaching expanse of sand, so dimly outlined to the northward, the restless, crestless wavelets, hurried shoreward by the light east wind, marked the ebbing tide line.

"Well, you see, Mootla, I've yet three years up there. I'm awfully bored."

"You have had enough of learning."

"Really, I'm glad you agree with me."

"You do not know the danger of a diploma. Beware of one. Don't risk the chance of starting in your business career with nothing but that to commend you. Stop where you are."

"Surely you underestimate its value."

"No, I don't; but I make the alarming discovery that you already have the malaria of pedantry in your

system. Fly, young man! I tell you, escape! Get out!"

"You are a wise friend, Mootla; but your advice is not the best this time."

"It is the wisdom of Solomon. Do you want to see the world only through the prism of self-complacency?"

"Please don't lecture——"

"I am an observing girl," she continued, not heeding the interruption. "I have seen too many young men fitted out for failure to let you go the same road. You have probably learned something; but for Heaven's sake stop before you convince yourself that you have learned all. I have grown up almost in the atmosphere of a university town—perhaps I'm called 'a college widow.' Well, to cut it short—I know."

Walter looked at her with admiration. Her eyes snapped even in the moonlight, and her face was handsomer than it had ever before appeared. In the impulsive manner which she was liable to affect at any moment, she repeated:

"I know!"

"But the loss of a college education is opposed to all my plans in life," argued Walter.

"Make new ones, then."

"Do what?"

"Go to work. Why, only yesterday I read of a tramp at a Boston police court who spoke seven languages, but could not make a living in any. One tongue and a shoemaker's last would have kept him out of jail."

Just at this moment a long-haired savant, a wandering minstrel of the starry sky, bearing a telescope on his shoulders, stopped near by at the brow of the cliff and set up his tripod. Walter regarded the man with curiosity, and at his suggestion Mootla seated herself at the glass to observe the eclipse already in progress. Then the young man listened idly.

"The moon is without an atmosphere, lady," began the bearded peripatetic. "Therefore, all the shadows are dark and sharp. . . . . Only at a time like this, lady, is there any twilight on the moon. . . . . Now you will notice the shadow slowly engulfing the Ocean of Storms, the lower portion of the Sea of Clouds and the Gulf of Showers. . . . . Behold, in the reddish glare of the eclipse, the towering craters of Kepler and Copernicus. . . . Steady, lady, steady; don't move the glass. . . . Patience, lady, patience."

"The moon affects me strangely, Walter," said Mootla, almost springing away from the telescope as if to break the spell of an infatuation. She returned near to Walter, but continued standing.

"If it moves the tides, why not the human heart?" was his answer.

"I wonder if I shall always see that picture?" she murmured to herself.

"What is it you found up there?" asked Walter, struck by Mootla's manner.

"O, it's terrible!" and she wrung her hands nervously. She looked into Walter's face as if for pity and protection. She found both, for he sprang at once to her

side and begged to know what he could do in her behalf. "What has happened, Mootla?" he demanded, glancing angrily toward the wrinkled and stooped itinerant star gazer.

"O, nothing," she answered, burying her face and eyes in her hands.

"But, Mootla, surely you can trust me? Why this agitation?"

"I have just seen in the face of the moon, as I have found it a thousand times among the embers in the fire, an awful vision of my childhood."

"Calm yourself; please don't allow such fancies to possess you," stammered Walter, awkwardly, alarmed at the girl's nervous agitation and doubtful what he ought to say.

"Fancies!" she almost shrieked. "Why, Walter, you don't know what you say. Something occured in my sight once that has made me sorry I ever was born!"

"There, now. Please stop. I have no claim upon your confidence," remonstrated Walter.

"But, my dear friend, I must tell somebody—either you or that poor old fool there," looking toward the astronomer, who was still busying himself about his telescope.

"Is it necessary?"

"Imperative. I've never told it to a human being, though I've described it to myself a hundred thousand times. Perhaps I shall be absolved of my long penance if I do but confide the secret to some one else."

"I warn you that I am a wretched confessor."

"But I insist, though I exact one condition."

"Any."

"You must not interrupt me."

"I promise."

"Very well, listen. I tell it you just as I see it with my eyes and hear it with my ears this moment," Mootla began. "I am a mere child. It is a warm summer day, and I am in a carpenter's shop, somewhere—for I never knew the name of the place—hunting blocks for toy-houses among the shavings. In the center of the room there are two workmen, quite near each other. They are intimate friends. One is using a broad-axe. He is trimming down a piece of timber, while the other makes mortice-holes in an end of the same great log. The younger man, who works with the mallet and chisel, is pale and much exhausted. Laying down his tools, he slowly raises his arms above his head as he drawls out,

"'You handle that axe so well, George.'

"'Yes?' murmurs the axe-man in a strangely interrogative tone, as the bright steel cleaves the sides of the tough beam. Now he stops chopping to glare vacantly at the cold gray metal; now he resumes work more vigorously.

"'It seems so keen,' the younger says.

"'And sure,' the elder adds.

"'Life's such a bore, I wish you'd split my head'—

"Poor fellow, he's taken at his word.

"A flash of light and a new crash put an everlasting

period to the dialogue. I see the axe's blade buried in the skull of the young apprentice, while its handle still quivers in the elder workman's grasp.

"My God! the look of horror on that murderer's face! It fades away, and the man falls in a swoon upon the floor.

"I hear the rush of feet. Blanched faces gather 'round in awful silence. I am not seen. They do not suspect me of the terrible crime. Why don't somebody speak? How hideous is silence!

"I see only one object in that room. Not the bleeding corpse, but the man who has done the murder. I, alone, have heard their conversation. I, alone, know how the young man begged for death. I crawl over to the prostrate chopper of wood. I understand the case. I stoop down and kiss his cold forehead. I forgive him —for I know that he only obliged a friend. They tell me that he also is dead. Strong men strive to tear me from him, but I beg to stay. They deny me this. I scream, 'He is my father!'"

"Is this true?" exclaimed Walter, terror-stricken at the realism of the narration.

"True," answered Mootla, solemnly; "but I swear to you that man acted without moral intent. I understand the psychology of that crime now. It was the correlation, the reciprocity of like thought simultaneously present in two minds. We are told of danger in conjunctions of the stars, of human ills that track the wake of an eclipse—what are they all, compared to the impulse that makes an innocent man a murderer?"

There was a long pause. Walter was dumb with amazement.

"It was all so horrible that I believe the average death rate in the village increased," Mootla resumed, hearing anew her own thoughts. "There were two suicides soon after, and a boy lover strangled his sweetheart."

Mootla rose with a start, and again walked over to the side of the lonely astronomer. The old man welcomed her return, and re-established her comfortably in the chair. Then, having again focussed the telescope to her eye, he resumed the duty of guiding Mootla across the trackless moon. Walter, almost stupefied by the confession of his companion, only gathered fragments of the harangue.

"Now, my lady, you will see along the eastern edge of the lunar globe, standing out 'gainst the sky with stereoscopic brightness, the returning sunlight begin to break in a narrow but rapidly broadening line. The eclipse is coming to an end." A half minute's silence, and he resumed: "The bright line has now shot northward, until it illuminates the peaks around the Land of Hoar Frost and southward to the furthest confines of the Ocean of Storms, beyond which it streams across the Sea of Moisture to the borders of the Moonalpine district with Ticho in the centre. . . . The brilliant peak of Aristarchus begins to shine like a star in the advancing light, lady; and behold, already the sunshine floods the shores of the Bay of Rainbows. Observe the gradual glow of the light on the cliffs and

on the long headlands at either extremity of this waterless bay. It is not like the usual sunrise on the moon."

And the shadow crept slowly off, revealing region after region, until the whole round face of the moon shone silver bright again.

Mootla rose, tossed the man a coin, and, calling Walter to follow, made her way toward the hotel.

"Who's that slender brown-haired fellow I saw you driving with on the road the other day?" she asked.

"In the dog-cart?"

"Yes."

"That's Jack Burnaby."

"Any relation to Burnaby, the famous New Yorker?"

"His son."

"O! is that all?" and Mootla laughed.

"Burnaby is a senior class man, but he don't give himself any airs—I mean, not on that account."

"I liked his looks very much," Mootla admitted.

"He's a mighty fine fellow, and I'm sorry he's going away from Cambridge," replied Walter. "But, Mootla, tell me, didn't you think that old astronomer very clever?"

"Blessed if I know what he was talking about," she said as they reached the porch.

"No?"

She was silent a moment. Then she exclaimed, looking him curiously in the face:

"I'll tell you what to do. Take the turning to the left, push open a green door, and get a drink. You look pale." Walter did not move.

Mootla stamped her foot impatiently.

"Go; get a glass of brandy, I say." And, laughing merrily, she hurried across the landing to the stairway. Her tall, lithe figure stopped on the first step, and she kissed her fingers to him as she said, "Good-night."

When Walter rose late the next morning and descended to the office he found a note in his box. It ran thus:

"DEAR WALTER—We find that we have accepted an invitation to dinner in Charlestown, this afternoon. Our good uncle had quite forgotten it, but remembered it by chance. He has chartered a steam tug, and we leave in a few minutes. You dine at 'The Willows' on Thanksgiving Day. Don't fail to come. I find Uncle Cotton knows Mr. Burnaby, and he has promised to invite him. Bring him out with you. MOOTLA."

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVOLUTION OF INIQUITY.

It was a late hour of the night before Thanksgiving-day. Nearly all New York was asleep. Miss Maria Pruden sat in her own room over her father's shop. She had just returned from witnessing the concluding performance of a long and successful run of "Romeo and Juliet" at a Broadway theatre. She had not been impressed with the gloomy side of the tragedy, but, having returned home in a happy mood, she was picturing in her mind a future Romeo who should fulfill the requirements of a judgment more mature and critical than that of the average playgoer.

Miss Pruden threw open the blinds and seated herself in the full glow of the moonlight. The window opened upon the now silent street. Divested of all romance, the room was what is advertised by boarding-house mistresses as "a nice hall-room, suitable for a 'single' lady or gent." There was no need for this dreamer to light the gas, for the moonbeams created a silver halo that enveloped her face and shoulders. Her pensive thoughts reverted to the unfortunate misunderstanding that, five years before had cost her the ardent affections of a rising physician. Alas! he was lost forever. Having been appointed a deputy coroner, he had since

made a fortune and married another woman. Then, curiously enough, a vaguely defined regard for Mr. Gilroy passed through her mind. This was the strangest of all her attachments; but the most unromantic women are often unconscious castle-builders. The admission that she had lost Doctor Dunwell only to bestow her yearning affections upon a man who, probably, would never know of her love, was not pleasant. She had never known Gilroy personally; and yet, strange as it seemed, she had felt a real affection for him, only to have it dispelled by the arrival of another woman. Who was this man, she asked herself, who had crept into her heart even before she had become conscious of her misplaced affection? She then remembered that the woman had not been visible about the house since the day of her arrival. She looked across the street. She saw the dim gaslight in the Limestone Bank on the corner, but all the shops were dark. The restaurant had closed earlier than usual.

The thoroughfare was entirely deserted. No, there was a man slowly coming uptown on the opposite sidewalk. In the glare of the street-lamp she saw that he was only a wretched straggler who had passed down a few minutes before, and apart from a sigh for his assumed wife and neglected family, Miss Pruden gave him no attention.

A dull, rumbling sound, followed by a sharp report, burst upon the stillness of the night. Something momentous and terrible had happened, somewhere. Miss Pruden was instantly alert. She thrust her head out

of the window and glanced up and down the street. She asked heself why she was so excited. The lone pedestrian on the opposite sidewalk proceeded slowly on his way, and evidently heard not this tremendous noise. Probably her nervous agitation had caused her to bestow more attention to the subject than it deserved. But at that instant a light, evidently carried by some one, flitted mysteriously across the upper windows of Gilroy's house opposite. Miss Pruden associated the building with the noise and an appalling theory, without the slightest fact to support it, was instantly fashioned in her mind. Fear and jealousy begat it. Marvelous the fancies that sudden fright and deep-seated covetousness conjure up!

At once Miss Pruden explained to herself all she had heard, seen, and imagined during the preceding three months—based upon a hypothesis which her clever coadjutors, jealousy and fear, set up for her. Her verdict, when she found her coy advances made from the window unnoticed, had been: "Gilroy is a rascal, capable of anything." Now, she supplemented that finding with the comments, "The woman! Yes, that woman! Gilroy has shot her, killed her—killed her, dead."

It was only the work of a moment to reach the top of the stair and to scream twice for her father—who slept in his store, as he had done for a quarter of a century. Awakened from a deep sleep, the ancient seller of hosiery staggered out into the lower hall and fairly groaned:

"Wha—t? Mariar!"

"Murder, father!" continued the voice from above. "Gilroy has killed—that woman!"

"Brother Gilroy killed? Go back ter bed, Mariar. These late hours and this play-actin' ull be the ruin of yer——"

"But, father," persisted the maiden, bounding down the stairs, "I heard the shot; it was across the street."

"Mariar, ut's absurd. Gilroy was too keerful," reasoned the old draper, who was still struggling with the two waking ideas in his mind, that Gilroy had been killed or had killed himself. His daughter, however, soon gave an unexpected direction to his thoughts.

"Go at once to the police station," urged the excited woman, as she reappeared from his sleeping-room. "Here's your long linen coat, father. Here's your shoes. There—your hat's on your head. Nobody's on the street. Run!"

Having jammed his hat over his eyes, she led the old man to the street door and literally pushed him out, and slammed the door.

Thus it was that on this now historic night, a wretched servant-girl, kept awake in a basement dining-room by a bad digestion, saw a tall figure enveloped in fluttering white drapery, flit past her window, and this is why she maintains to this hour that she has seen Death walking abroad.

Fortunately, Mr. Pruden arrived at the station-

house in an adjacent street before he encountered a policeman. Had he met one, he certainly would have passed the rest of the night in a cell as a dangerous lunatic. Reaching the sergeant's desk in safety, however, he stated that somebody had been shot in the building occupied by Gilroy's restaurant. His daughter had heard the melee, and he himself—well, he "hadn't just exactly heard the shootin', you see, but he seen the house, and, for sartain, it wore a very suspicious look. A v-e-r-y suspicious look. Indeed, he should say——"

"You should say nothing, sir," thundered Captain Churchill, who made his appearance from an inside room, having been awakened by the furore. "Who are you, coming at this hour of the night to blast the reputation of a good citizen like Gilroy?"

"I am Ezekiel Pruden, a merchant on Greenwich street for twenty-eight year, comin' March," rejoined the complainant promptly, somewhat on his metal, and now wide awake.

"Then, you seriously make the charge?" asked the Captain.

"Seriously? Sartintly—that is, I make it for my daughter."

"Turn out the entire reserves, Sergeant," growled the Captain. "I'll go myself, now I'm up."

The gong thundered, and for five minutes the entire building was in confusion. In the men's quarters the rapid progress of a hasty toilet could be studied. The Captain returned to his room to find his cap and

boots, and the Sergeant made the formal entry in the books.

Amid the bustle that was going on around, Father Pruden was able to slip out, and quickly retraced his steps. Having mounted the stairs to his daughter's sitting-room, he approached the window and awaited developments.

His faithful child told him in a few sentences how the lounger on the opposite sidewalk had followed his flying footsteps to the corner of the street in which the station-house was located, and how, after waiting there a few moments, he had retraced his course with great haste, in order to let himself into the side-door of Gilroy's restaurant. From that door she had not seen him emerge. Even yet the street was silent as a meadow path. It was a night of nights for a great crime!

"And this is Gilroy's end?" Miss Pruden kept asking herself with a monotony that finally proved distressing to her parent.

"Women have proved the ruin of many's the good man, Mariar," volunteered the old shopkeeper, thinking aloud.

"Yes, that bad woman; it was her work——"

"It mout 'ave been the'r eatin'-house, Mariar. We must allow fer the curse overhangin' thet eatin'-house, my child. We shed hope——"

"We should know, father," interrupted the violent woman, as she drew in her head and shoulders from the window whence she had been peering up the

street. "And we shall know. Here come the police!" She was right; the blue-coats were coming. They filed across the deserted thoroughfare at the corner above. A brace of trusty men were sent down the adjacent street, to prevent escape in that direction. The main portion of the squad, twelve men, halted in front of the door of Gilroy's restaurant. The moment had come. Father and child, at the window opposite, awaited the *denouement* with feverish anxiety, the old measurer of tape muttering to himself:

"Mariar mout be mistakent."

Every step that Captain Churchill took after leaving the station-house made him more ashamed of the errand on which he was engaged. Any suspicions against Gilroy were dismissed as too absurd for consideration. It was possible that burglars had entered the chop-house, and had murdered its proprietor. This fear incited him to go forward. Gilroy was a valuable man to the neighborhood and must be protected.

When the police captain had properly posted his men so that the burglars, if there were any, could not escape, he went to the street-door of the restaurant and gave the bell a lusty pull. Then, with his eyes fixed on the windows of the second story, he waited. No sound from within! He rang again even more vehemently, and was about to give orders to break in the door, when a window slowly opened, and Gilroy's head and shoulders appeared—Gilroy safe and well, but very sleepy.

"What's wanting?" he drawled out, in a half-awake fashion.

"We were informed that burglars had broken into your house and were killing you, Gilroy," said Captain Churchill, who knew the chop-house man well enough to be on his free-luncheon list.

"Oh! it's you, is it, Captain?" said Gilroy, quickly, recognizing him apparently by his voice. "I've hardly got my eyes open yet. I see you've your men with you, too. I'm much obliged, but there's nobody in the house, so far as I know."

"That's what I thought," muttered the Captain. Then, turning to his men, he said:

"Fall in, column of twos; about face, forward——"

Just at that moment a shrill shout, startling and unexpected, rang out on the night air from a window on the opposite side of the avenue. It was a woman's voice that screamed:

"There they go! On the roof! See them! See them! Stop thieves!"

Captain Churchill and his men sprang into the middle of the street barely in time to see three figures traversing the roofs of the houses at the extreme upper end of the block. Before he and his officers had recovered from their surprise the persons had disappeared.

Gilroy had drawn his head inside the window the instant the shout was heard, and only stopping long enough to seize a flat package which he fastened inside his underclothing, made his appearance at the

street door, demanding excitedly where the burglars were. He carried his coat and vest in his hand, having evidently caught them up as he ran from his room. What the police overlooked in the excitement of the moment was that his shoes were entirely laced up. He threw the door wide open, and urged the policemen to hurry up to the roof. He even followed them half way up the first flight of stairs ; but he quickly descended, and, under the excuse of aiding in the search, he hurried rapidly up the street, and was soon lost to sight.

Meanwhile, Captain Churchill, having explored the roof only to find that the scuttle of a neighboring house had been wrenched off, and that the burglars had effected their escape, returned to Gilroy's building. He called the name of the proprietor loudly at the top of the stairs, but did not receive any answer. Then, in company with a few of his men, he began to explore the upper rooms of Gilroy's house, to assure himself that none of the burglars was hidden in the closets or under the beds. The strangest circumstance he observed was that there were several beds in the various rooms, all unmade. But not a single person save Gilroy had he seen.

Finally the door of a rear room was opened, and to the Captain's surprise, the apartment contained a workbench, a lathe, a grindstone, and a combination "jimmy" of great strength for forcing open safe doors. When Churchill saw this his policeman's instinct reasserted itself over his strong social feelings. He

clutched one of his men by the arm and whispered in his ear:

"Hurry down stairs and arrest Gilroy at once. Take him straight to the station-house with a couple of men. I don't want to see him."

The officer sprang down the steps to carry out the orders, but soon returned with the unpleasant news that Gilroy couldn't be found.

It was now only the work of a few minutes to descend into the cellar. Churchill was completely mystified, but there he found what brought the cold perspiration to his face. Beyond the sawdust-filled partition, which had served its purpose as a deadener of sound, was a steam drilling apparatus, power being supplied from the innocent-looking iron boiler at the other end of the cellar. Near the drill was a hole in the cellar wall, opening directly into the vault of the Limestone Bank. Through the aperture shone the light of a candle that had been left inside the vault.

Captain Churchill was thus enabled to see that the safe doors had been blown off, and that the bank had been robbed. This, then, was the noise which the woman had heard! Why had he not come more quickly? Many regrets filled his breast.

The delay in getting the police to the place had been ample for the requirements of the burglars. Captain Churchill found, on crawling through into the vault, that the floor was littered with unnegotiable papers, while all the money and bonds had been taken. He was so overcome with the strange turn events had

taken that he lost much precious time in returning to the station-house and sending out a general alarm.

As soon as the officers of the bank could be sent for, the astounding discovery was made that eight hundred thousand dollars in cash had been taken, besides a large quantity of bonds that were convertible into money if quickly handled.

The directors were summoned. Mr. Catesberry, the cashier, was greatly excited, and shed tears in the fullness of his sympathy. So much did this misfortune overcome him that he was confined to his house for several days by nervous prostration.

A careful though hasty examination of the cash-book showed that every cent in the custody of the institution had been safe in its vaults. All was gone. Not a dollar in cash had been overlooked by the burglars.

The effect upon the tradesmen of Greenwich Street may be imagined. The curse on the restaurant, that all had believed in, entered nearly every home, and made its occupants miserable for years. Many persons sold their merchandise and good will for what they could get and left the neighborhood. Several ruined shop-keepers took their lives. Since Fate was clearly their foe, death was the safest refuge.

None of the burglars was caught. The detectives did not detect any better than they do nowadays.

CHAPTER XII.

A DINNER AT "THE WILLOWS."

THERE is a crisis in every young man's life. The night on the cliff had set Walter to thinking. Mootla, who had called herself "a college widow," more in a spirit of self-abnegation than reality, had shown him the folly of boyhood. The disclosure brought some regrets. Unlike that adolescent stage in which the voice is broken only to take on greater volume and strength, this mental change from boy to man often occurs in an instant of time. Misfortune or joy, sudden humiliation or awakened pride may work the transmutation. However it come, there is a moment in which the young man recognizes calmly the demands that society—the society of tradition—makes upon him, and resolutely, defiantly, it may be, prepares to meet them. From that time, he thinks, acts, even walks, differently. It is the end not of physical, but mental youth. Physically the era of youth may run a lifetime. Age may be defined as dating from that unhappy hour in which we begin to take care of our health. While we can play havoc with our physical constitutions; can eat, drink, sleep, aye, love with impunity—without penalty, punishment, or thought of the future—then, then are we young. But with that evil day in

which we must regulate our diet, dilute our tea, count our cigars, measure our liquors, time our hours of sleep, and give up our affairs of the heart, comes old age!

Walter was sitting in his dormitory. He was in a brown study this beautiful November morning. So deeply was his mind engaged that he couldn't keep a cigar alight. A knock at his door! He hardly heard it; no impression was made on his senses, and he remained silent. The knock was repeated, but it was not until the departing footsteps of the person without were heard that Walter awakened from his reverie. He sprang to the door, threw it wide open, and called the retreating figure back. It was Jack Burnaby, who, turning quickly, asked:

"Why didn't you answer, Rawson?"

"I don't know, unless I was making a study of human nature," rejoined Walter, smiling.

"Confound your frankness. Wanted to see whether I'd try the door-knob, or walk in without asking, did you?"

"No, honestly. I'm sick of college life, and was trying to devise some excuse for going home!"

"Which is it?" asked Jack. "A girl, or a 'condition' on the last examination?"

"Oh, my standing in the class is all right," Walter hurried to say.

"Then it's a girl. Poor fellow!" And Jack affected to commiserate his friend, sorrowfully.

Walter rose, threw off his house jacket, and as-

sumed a walking coat. He then looked at his watch and said:

"I ordered the team for eleven; it 's due now." Looking out the window, he descried the handsome pair of chestnut horses that he kept at a stable up in the town.

"Here we are, Burnaby; let 's go at once."

"I 'm ready," answered Jack, lighting a cigar.

"Your uncle lives out on the turnpike, doesn't he?"

"Yes; in a great stone house, back among a clump of trees."

"I know the place well. Drove past there the other afternoon. Mighty comfortable-looking homestead, I tell you."

"You'll see the prettiest feature about it after we get inside the house," continued Walter, as they descended the stairs.

"An odd Queen Anne staircase, perhaps?"

"No, indeed," answered Walter, laughing heartily.

"Warn me in advance. Surprises 'break me up.' What shall I see?"

"A pretty girl."

"Your uncle's adopted child?"

"Yes."

"The young lady with the odd name, that I have heard Mr. Mather mention so often at your rooms, I presume," said Jack Burnaby, half interrogatively. "Is she really interesting, Walter?"

"She's clever as a fairy princess," answered he with real enthusiasm.

The young men climbed into the light buggy, and the spirited horses dashed off toward "The Willows" the instant they were given their heads by the stableman. Walter was taking his friend, at Cotton Mather's invitation, to Thanksgiving dinner at the old homestead.

Mootla was standing at the front door to welcome them, so Jack Burnaby inspected the chief article of *vertu* before entering the house. She wore a closely-fitting garnet cashmere dress, richly trimmed. It was a very pretty picture that the open doorway, with its shadowy background, presented. Never was Mootla's manner more easy when introduced to a stranger, or her laugh more gleeful than when she greeted Walter. She led the way into the great hall, where the butler hastened to take off the top-coats of the visitors. Young Burnaby was much struck with the girl's pretty face.

Entering the drawing-room, Walter was surprised to find two young ladies and a young man already there. Mootla presented the new comers. The visitors were the Wharton sisters and a Mr. Lorrison who accompanied them. A moment later, Cotton Mather came in from another part of the house, with a sedate-looking man whom he presented to Walter and Jack, as soon as he had warmly welcomed them himself. He was the girl's father, Mr. Wharton. As Mather introduced Burnaby, he found opportunity to whisper in the ear of his elder visitor: "Son of the great Burnaby, of the New York *Cyclone*." There was an ex-

pression on Father Wharton's face that appeared indescribably funny to Walter.

"Who is he?" asked Walter, the moment he got Mootla's ear.

"An innocent old guy, who lives down the road a bit," she answered.

"Isn't he a preacher?"

"No; he's in the hat business, I believe. Uncle Cotton fancies the old man, and I try to like the girls."

"On the principle that one knows a person better after she has fought her; eh, Mootla?" suggested Walter, smiling, as he recalled what she had told him of the scene at the Morton school.

"Not exactly that. I have outgrown my girlish dislikes, just as Mabel has outlived her lisp. Even the younger girl does not 'toe in' any longer. I can forgive, and they appear to have forgotten."

"Don't you believe it, Mootla. Look out for them," said Walter.

"Why, we were mere children when that happened."

"It's my turn to advise. I say, 'Look out!"

"I don't see what they came for, anyhow. Uncle invited the old gentleman over, and he brought the girls, and Mabel's beau, with him. I'm sorry, for I thought we'd have a nice, quiet time of it," she concluded, petulantly.

"Say, Mootla; I see old Pop Wharton has pinned Jack already," and Walter chuckled to himself. "He looks like such an infernal old bore."

"And so he is. We must save Mr. Burnaby," she answered.

"If I 'm not mistaken, Jack will take care of himself. Suppose we leave him to his fate. Ask the girls and the young 'swell' to join us, and we'll take a stroll in the conservatory among the flowers."

Poor Burnaby was writhing under a most distasteful inquisition. The "boss hatter" was putting questions to him somewhat like these :

"You 'll succeed your father ? Easy business to learn ? Anybody can manage a newspaper ? Brought up in it, doubtless ? Are editors well paid ? How many col-lumns does each man write in a day ? Has your father been long in the business ? How much did he have to start *The Cyclone?* Does he own it entirely ? How many copies does it circulate ? What does it earn yearly ? Is it the best paper in New York? Do people advert-is in it ? What is its politics ?——"

"Really, you must excuse me," said Burnaby, finally, rising frigidly.

A moment more and he would have made his escape, but Mr. Mather, having chucked Mootla under the chin, came over to the group, and, unconscious of the above cross-examination, said :

"Great property, *The Cyclone*, I tell you, Wharton. I 'd rather control that journal than be President of the United States."

"I was just asking Mr. Burnaby about it," answered Wharton.

"Yes, the gentleman was manifesting a kind interest in the matter," said Burnaby, with just a trace of irony in his voice that the shipping merchant detected. "Perhaps he's a newspaper publisher himself."

"No, sir," promptly rejoined Mr. Wharton. "I am a wholesaler of hats and caps."

"Indeed!" said Burnaby, seizing the cue quickly. "Know the whole business, doubtless?"

"Yes, I flatter myself I do."

"Did you succeed your father?"

"No, I am a self-made man," was the pompous rejoinder.

"Began in a small way, then?" continued Burnaby, pressing his advantage home.

"A man ought to start at the bottom."

"Certainly," commented Burnaby. "Worked as an apprentice? Grew up in it? Easy to learn, I suppose? How many hats can you make a day? Are the wages high? Could you 'block a hat for fifty cents' while I wait? How much money, or how many hats did you start with? Big store? Much trade? Nothing like hats, eh? Yours the best in Boston? How much do you get apiece for them? What becomes of the old hats?"

Burnaby's courtesy was marked. He drove the gaff into the old man's throat according to the most approved rules of the cock-pit, putting every question with an increased manifestation of curiosity. It was not long before the old hatter realized he was being spitted, and tried to wriggle into some other theme.

He couldn't get away from Burnaby. Cotton Mather was in a fog of mystification. He knew nothing of the young man's provocation, but he could see that Wharton was thoroughly miserable. Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

Mootla re-entered from the hall with her companions and checked the conversation, which was becoming decidedly uncomfortable for Wharton and Mather. Mr. Burnaby excused himself and stepped over to the young ladies. He had hardly time to begin a chat with Miss Mabel Wharton before the butler entered to announce dinner. Burnaby promptly offered the lady his arm; Walter gave his to the younger sister, and Mr. Lorrison, their companion, took Mootla out.

The dining-room, which was open into the conservatory, was filled with the fragrance of flowers, and in the center of the table was a bright bed of roses. Burnaby was seated on Mootla's right, and Mr. Wharton was gratified to find himself at the upper end of the table, close to his host. The dinner was excellent, and well served, with two exceptions that Burnaby could not avoid observing. Instead of being warm the claret was hot, while the turnips were hard and cold. He could not repress a secret feeling of surprise that the wine had been boiled instead of the vegetables.

"Do you enjoy Herbert Spencer?" Miss Mabel Wharton asked Burnaby.

Walter and Mootla exchanged glances with the rapidity of lightning. Walter said with his eyes, "Didn't I tell you she meditated trouble?" Mootla's

retinæ flashed back the confession, "I might have expected it." Burnaby was not disconcerted in the slightest degree. He calmly replied :

"Frankly, no. I do not relish his philosophy ; but I 've read so little of his work, perhaps, that I have no right to sit in judgment."

"Why, Mr. Burnaby, I 'm surprised," said Miss Mabel. "He 's great. What have you dipped into ?"

"Let me see. I used to read him in the English quarterly reviews, *The Westminster*, if I remember. I believe I digested some of his essays on "Personal Beauty," "Gracefulness," or something of the kind.

"And you haven't formed any opinion ?"

"Excuse me, but I didn't say that."

"Then I must insist on an estimate of his intensity."

"He certainly is a creature of stupendous ideas," said Jack Burnaby, slowly. "Perhaps he was intended for some large planet and only lodged on earth by mistake. In Jupiter, I dare say, he 'd do well enough, but here he 's 'an odd size.'" Then he added in a low voice, "Your papa will tell you what that means."

Miss Mabel's eyes flashed. Walter was watching her carefully, while he tried to keep up a conversation with the sister. He made an effort to catch Mootla's glance again to warn her of the danger, but she carefully avoided his eyes. Could it be that she welcomed war at her own table ? Mather and Wharton were talking earnestly together in low tones about the value of real estate in the neighborhood and chiefly intent on

their dinner and the wine. Walter was in despair; he "looked daggers" at Jack, who returned his stare as unconcernedly as an old offender.

"I admire him, chiefly because he 's a noble defender of the rights of woman," said Miss Wharton, sententiously.

"Does he class her among 'the Unknowable'? When we decide what we don't know we can begin to eat celery," said Walter, with much affected seriousness, as he bit the end off a stalk of that vegetable.

"No, indeed," answered Miss Wharton, haughtily. "He says, 'Equity knows no difference of sex.'"

"Yes, but he cites the English statute, still respected by Parliament, which permits a man to beat his wife in moderation, or to imprison her in any room in his house," said Burnaby.

"Only to condemn it," was the quick explanation.

"In the sentence that follows, perhaps; but his whole system of sociology sets out to prove that all we have of good or bad in society is the growth of evolution. He applies evolution to sociology, as Darwin does to Zoology. Therefore, whatever is is best, because it is the product of the survival of the better."

"But he defends woman," argued Miss Wharton.

"Again you mistake him," continued Burnaby, realizing that he was combating the young lady's most cherished belief. "He simply names several queens, artists, novelists and scientists among the sex, and dogmatically affirms that they are the intellectual

equals of any member of the race of man. By the side of Alexander or Cæsar, for instance, he would put Zenobia or Maria Theresa. With Newton he would match Mrs. Somerville ; Fielding or Dickens he would check off with Miss Austin, Mme. Daudevant, or forsooth, Hannah More. To show the absurdity of that reasoning, I doubt if two of us at this table have the same estimate of any of these persons in history or literature."

"I see nothing repugnant in the command and the responsibility of man," said Mootla.

Miss Mabel Wharton was silent. She had discovered that, although Burnaby did not claim to know anything of the new Synthetic Philosophy, he was quite as well informed about it as she was.

"I fear that you're an enemy of the sex," purred the younger sister, looking straight across the table at Mr. Burnaby.

"Indeed I 'm not, Miss Olive. Though I admit that the ladies are a mystery to me," answered Jack.

"He admits it, do you hear ?" exclaimed Miss Mabel vaguely.

"Yes, I do," granted Jack Burnaby. "We can't all be Herbert Spencers ; we can't all be handsome, for instance, and by a natural process of reasoning I could prove, without resort to a book of logarithms, that we can't all be women."

"It 's a great pity," said Miss Mabel, catching at the only straw afloat.

"I take it we are willing to admit, for argument's

sake, that a few men are a necessary evil," suggested Mootla, good humoredly.

"In order that the lovelier and better part of humanity may see, by frightful example, what it has escaped," added Burnaby.

"Natural modesty," rejoined Mootla, "prevents our sex from saying much for itself."

"So the delightful duty devolves perforce on the other sex," interjected Walter, again taking a hand in the general conversation.

"We could not speak unkindly of the ladies if we would, for a man can't kick his mother," said Mr. Lorrison, feeling called on to add something to the discussion.

"At least not with impunity," added Burnaby, quickly.

"I mean the present state of public sentiment is opposed to it," echoed Lorrison, looking very solemn and inclined to suspect that he was about to be guyed in his turn.

"For my part," resumed Burnaby, "I have the greatest respect for the ladies. They are the loveliest, daintiest, bric-a-brac imaginable."

"But they require cautious handling," exclaimed Miss Wharton.

"True; one can't drop them without regret," retorted Burnaby.

"And they certainly can't be 'picked up for a song,' as the china gatherers say," added Mootla.

There was an ominous silence in the general conver-

sation for a few moments as the last course of the dinner prior to the dessert was removed.

"Very fine fruit," said Mr. Wharton, vaguely, almost the only word he had spoken for all ears at the table since sitting down. The purpose of the remark, as well as its malice, was evident when he added: "How much would the pears cost in New York, Mr. Burnaby?"

"Pardon me, my dear sir," rejoined the young man, with the most innocent look imaginable; "I am not a green grocer, nor did I ever go to market."

Swords were crossed again, but Burnaby's guard was so strong that the elder man couldn't break it down.

"I gathered them myself and wrapped them in tissue-paper," added Mootla, who had been arranging with Walter for a drive during the week, and had only heard Mr. Wharton's first remark in praise of the fruit.

"I thought you had, for when you came into the room where Mr. Burnaby and papa were talking they looked at you as if to say 'How black she is getting,'" retorted Miss Mabel.

Burnaby looked the young lady who had spoken as nearly in the face as he could from his position by her side. Then turning to Mootla, who was growing pale, he asked, with the art of a Metternich:

"I am not a citizen of this glorious Commonwealth. Will you therefore instruct me, Miss Mootla?"

"Certainly," she managed to say.

"Which course shall I follow to conform to your code? Shall I contradict Miss Wharton, or shall I tell you, my dear miss, that *I* think you as fair as a lily?"

"In either case, Mr. Burnaby, I should be proud of your good opinion," answered Mootla, as the faintest blush of maidenhood appeared at her temples and slowly spread down her pale cheeks. Burnaby's words made her inexpressibly happy. He was *so* clever, she thought, and she loved all clever people, her conscience told her.

Thus was the dinner finished in safety, though that most unhappy social phenomenon—a woman's quarrel—hung over the feast. Mootla had prepared a novelty, just before the coffee, in the shape of roasted pistachio nuts, served with a small glass of port. These were brought on, after four kinds of pies, in a hot napkin and in their shells, which opened like mussels.

Despite the mishaps of the dinner, the occasion was eminently instructive to Walter. Mootla's self-control under great provocation, her tact, which alone had prevented a re-opening of the old feud between her and the Wharton girls, had not escaped him. As hostess, she was in no way to blame for the exhibition of ill-nature which her guardian's guests had shown, and the toleration she had displayed, simply because the affair had occurred in her house (or because Mr. Burnaby was present?) stamped her as a young woman of shrewdness.

As they drove home together Burnaby talked to

Walter much of Mootla. Visibly, she had made a lasting impression on him; and though Walter was only able to partly explain the motive for the conduct of the Wharton girls, it was undeniable that every act of Mootla's had only increased the devotion which the two young men felt for her.

The more Walter saw of Burnaby the greater his respect for the newspaper became. He already recognized it as the real source of a large part of his information.

Burnaby believed that the daily newspaper should be suited to all classes and tastes; that no single reader was expected to peruse its entire contents. A shop owner did not hope to sell his whole stock to the first comer who entered. Walter had studied the newspaper from a commercial vantage point likewise, and he saw that it was the only form in which literature paid its way.

As soon as he was alone that evening Walter resumed the theme which had engaged his thoughts so earnestly in the morning. It required little wisdom to discover that the paths of trade chiefly led to wealth. He nipped in its incipiency all tendency to be a literary idolater, and made an end at the beginning. He loaded up his pipe and tried to reason it out with himself. Admitting that a commercial life was his destiny, why waste his best years in school? To go on, or to stop where he was? That was the problem. The longer he pondered it the deeper his perplexity became. Mechanically he resolved to submit his future course to

the arbitrament of chance—the Delphic oracle of the American college boy. The talisman was a gold coin which he always carried about him. Many questions, serious and trifling, had it decided for him. Even knotty points of class-room diplomacy had been submitted to it. When it rained or snowed, "heads or tails" decided whether he should go to recitation or stay in his rooms. The same agency sometimes decreed that he should devote an evening to billiards instead of Æschines. So there appeared nothing phenomenal in his act as he gave the coin a ringing toss toward the ceiling, listened to its hum until it struck the floor, and then lighted a match to find it. No doubts as to the wisdom of such an arbitrament disturbed his mind. The oracle must speak. On his knees, muttering, "Heads, I go; tails, I stay," he prosecuted the search until he saw the gold piece with the face side upward. Liberty had spoken! He was as firmly decided to leave college as though he had reasoned it out after weeks of thought.

Trifling and silly are some of the guides to human action. In the Navy it is the unwritten maxim with the officers of the deck—"When in doubt, in the face of imminent danger, do nothing." In other words, let things take their own course. Why not appeal to chance in doubtful moments? It is an element that enters into human existence so largely that the man who allows it to direct his course may be the wisest of philosophers. He has, at least, the frankness to admit an influence secretly recognized in the mind of man

since his career on earth began. While Walter was in this mood there came a knock at the door. He rose and opened it. A telegraph boy handed him a message. He tore it open hastily. It was from his mother. It informed him, in ten words, of the robbery of the Limestone Bank the night before, and the loss of the assets of the family therein deposited.

Great as the shock was, Walter's youth enabled him to recover from it almost immediately. He had decided a quarter of an hour before to leave Cambridge; now there could not be any delay. Most of the night was spent in packing his trunks.

The following morning he drove over to "The Willows" to say farewell. Until she heard his determination, Mootla had been unusually bright and happy. Looking at her beaming face, it would have been impossible to read there any ghastly family secret such as had been confided to him. So closely was it guarded that her benefactor, Cotton Mather, had never gained a hint of it.

There was another and more potent reason for the fading out of the terrible vision of her girlhood. To put it bluntly, Mootla suspected that the man who had enacted the tragedy in the carpenter shop was not her father. This mental admission was a great comfort to her, and in making it the respect for her mother's memory did not suffer in the slightest degree.

Mootla's manner toward Walter had become more sincerely affectionate since their chat on the cliff two months before. The reason was that, bit by bit, she

had gleaned from him the story of his escapade with the pauper woman. She easily fixed the identity of the suffering mother. Walter stood revealed to her as the benefactor of a woman whom all the world, even her daughter, had ignored.

Before Walter had been gone from Cambridge a day, Mootla had awakened to a new grief. She was in awful doubt whether her poor mother was dead, as she had always been told. She secretly determined to visit Crumpet and make amends for what seemed heartless ingratitude. It was easy to convince the merchant that he had business in New York. Mootla accompanied him. Once there, she frankly confessed her purpose in coming.

Cotton Mather hardly knew what to say. He assured her that he had a copy of the official record of her mother's death. He begged her not to visit Crumpet, and pointed out the impossibility of going with her. In the impetuosity of his feelings he confessed so much that he was forced, in justice to the dead woman, to tell Mootla the sad truth.

She was not crushed under the blow. She had so far anticipated it that no long dormant filial love gorged her heart with emotion.

"I must go alone," she said.

The following day a lady dressed in deep black went to Crumpet by rail, secured a carriage, and was driven to Hopewell House. After a long search, with the aid of a gentle country parson who had read a priceless prayer over the corpse, the last resting place of "Mrs.

Alice" was found. Without difficulty a permit was obtained to remove the coffin to the cemetery in the village. A lot was bought, and when the unknown stranger visited the place on the following day the transfer had been made. The mound was sodded, but no gravestone was ever set.

CHAPTER XIII.

"NOW !"

"I nearly had to wait."—*Louis XIV.*

"WHAT sort of a fellow is he ?"

"Rather fresh, I should say," rejoined the head book-keeper of Adolphus Dobell and Co., bankers and brokers, doing business under the shadow of Trinity church. It was early in the forenoon, and the employes were just getting down town for the day.

"Will he be here this morning ?"

"So old Dolly said last night," replied Spaulding, the head book-keeper. "Did you get Gunwale's notes discounted ?"

"Easily enough. The Copperas Bank took the paper," answered the note clerk.

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of several other employes who promptly began their day's toil by gathering about Spaulding to discuss the new clerk whose arrival was momentarily expected. A young commission broker who did considerable curb-stone business for the firm, suddenly thrust his head inside the door and shouted :

"I say, Sticky ?"

"Hello !" exclaimed Spaulding, answering to the nickname by which he was generally known.

"He's coming. Saw him on Nassau street a moment ago with the old man. Look sharp!" and he vanished.

After a brief interval Mr. Dobell, the head of the house, entered, followed by Walter Rawson. Every clerk in the place affected to be busy with his books. A few moments sufficed to introduce the young man to his future companions. Dobell did not believe in any formality, but merely said:

"Put him through, Spaulding. He wants to learn the business; give him a chance."

"He shall have it, sir," was the studiously polite reply.

Dolly Dobell, as he was popularly known, passed into his private office, and, so far as appeared from his actions, did not think of young Rawson again for months. The old broker was a thoroughly moral man, as the world goes. Though he professed religion, he tempered his creed to shorn sinners, and, on occasion, could be the jolliest fellow in the Juniper Club. He was a person of indifferent education, and his fortune had been wholly the result of an accident. He possessed a kind heart that at times asserted its supremacy over his natural hypocrisy. Broker's clerks, struggling along under a load of small debts and the remorse of unrealized hopes, were wont to guy him as "the little old man who gives 'pints,'" and pretended to despise his "lack of nerve" and his "childish sobriety."

Under these influences Walter undertook to learn

the art of money-getting. Before many weeks he detected the first sophism of success, and weighed to a nicety the value of patience. "All things for him who waits," says the old saw; but "waiting" was next to impossible for a character like his. He saw that the trick of being patient consisted in knowing exactly when the moment came to say "Now!" and to act instantly. The patient man, in his opinion, was he who dashed forward with the future reasonably clear ahead.

Walter kept his secret, but set about to study out this theory of success, while he mastered the purely clerical details of his work.

Matters had meanwhile taken a sharp turn at Crumpet. Under the spur of necessity, Mrs. Rawson had developed more energy and executive capacity than she had ever shown before. She moved quicker. Her blood circulated more freely. Her respiration became fuller—the vital current in her veins was better oxygenated. With new duties sufficient to occupy her mind, she found less opportunity to dwell upon the constant imminence of "spells," and she was soon able to withstand nervous attacks with fortitude. Her cheeks became ruddy. She entered on a new lease of life.

At her husband's death Mrs. Rawson had received the indifferent sympathy of the community — that Crumpet sympathy that always comes too late—and it lasted just as long as there was reasonable probability that she would soon follow her companion to the grave. But when her health visibly began to improve—when

out of her apoplectic habit was evolved the energy of a new existence, this community naturally despised itself for having been deceived.

The mental alertness of the widow was evident in her promptitude to recognize the changed feeling toward her and the tact displayed in overcoming it. Like many women, she never had known ambition. She had even been indifferent to public opinion. Now her eyes were open. She saw through the clear lens of her awakened mentality the local color given to all her acts.

She comprehended that the first one whose interests would suffer was her son Walter. An advantageous marriage for him was of paramount importance. Social standing in her own community she must have. It was essential to secure certain influences which she hoped to exert in the city in Walter's behalf. She at once set for herself the task of entering society. True, she had less money than formerly, but she had more sense.

Walter was calm and resolute. As we know, he had ideas of his own about the future. His marriage with Miss Vreeland gave him no real anxiety. He regarded it as certain to occur, though he thought he had observed that the lady's parents did not treat him as cordially as they had before the collapse of the Limestone Bank. He sometimes imagined, too, that Violet affected a haughtiness of manner in his presence that was unnatural. There was a difference in social position, he admitted to himself, between a landed

proprietor at Crumpet and a broker's clerk in New York. But change in Violet's heart? Never.

He had been in Dobell's office several months when he called at the Vreeland city mansion one evening to meet Violet. He was coolly received by her mother. Mrs. Vreeland came into the parlor, but did not evince any disposition to seat herself, and answered all his inquiries curtly. Violet had gone during the afternoon to visit friends at Tarrytown, he was told. There was apparently an uncertainty about her return. Mrs. Vreeland's manner absolutely forbade any of the questions which Walter, up to that moment, had felt himself fully entitled to ask. His heart told him that Violet was in the house, and that she either did not know of his presence or that his visit was unwelcome. Walter was almost faint as he bowed himself out. Though he did not intend to surrender meekly, he recognized the new sorrow that hung over him. Loss of father, fortune, and future wife were surely more than his share of affliction. He called the next day, and the next; but Violet was invisible. He wrote her, but no answers came. Must he give her up?

Despite his determination to hide the knowledge of his repulse from his mother, she read in his eyes the grief of a young man's heart when he made his weekly visit to Crumpet. How changed was she! Her mother's sensibilities were aglow. Formerly, she might have detected his paleness; now, with her thoroughly alert shrewdness, she saw beyond the quivering lips and drooping eyelids. Walter told her

all. This blow which she had secretly feared but hoped would not fall, roused her. She became great; she rose to the emergency. She went to New York, consulted the family lawyer, discreetly mortgaged some city property of her own, and deposited the cash in the village bank. The carriage that she had given up at her husband's death because the exertion of riding wearied her, was re-established. She was driven along the river road every fair afternoon.

"Away with widow's weeds!" she said.

She became a regular attendant at church, and gave the lie to all rumors of poverty by dispensing charity in every direction that provoked comment. Dinner-parties next followed, served in every instance under the direction of the best caterer in New York. In a season's time she was the social nabob of the village, courted by the best of the summer residents, and invited to all their receptions and dinners in the city during the winters. To New York she transferred her residence in October, closing the Crumpet homestead and occupying pleasant apartments at one of the best hotels. She found for Walter more desirable wives than Violet, but he never appeared to understand her schemes. He clung despondingly to his first love.

In his business, Walter's progress had been earnest and regular. Curiously, he was popular with his fellow-clerks, yet never sociable. Though he never criticised his employer in his absence, as did others, he did not truckle to him in his presence. He was quick

to comprehend an order, and prompt to execute it. His clear, sonorous voice presaged success, should he ever become a buyer on the crowded floor of the Exchange. Yet Walter sometimes thought his lot a very hard one. He had given up so much—his home life, his college career, his fortune, his intended wife, and with her his future happiness. He felt deserted and lonely, but never posed to himself as a martyr. Nothing so dwarfs ambition as the self-consciousness of martyrdom. Other people's pity is hard enough to bear, but when a man once begins to sympathize with himself his pride vanishes for ever.

At the end of an unusually heavy day's work, Walter was detained by his books until after the other clerks had gone. The young man who acted as messenger and whose duty it was to close the office, stood waiting. His manner was that of a preoccupied spectator, who had his mind full of anxiety. Finally, he said :

"I beg pardon, Mr. Walter, but I'd like to know one thing."

"There's very little about the business that I can tell you, George."

"O, it's not that."

"Well, what is it ?"

"How much income a week should a young fellow have to marry ?"

"Why, George, that's a queer question," answered Walter, half inclined to laugh until he saw the earnestness of his interrogator.

"But, sir, do give me some idea."

"I really don't know. I suppose a couple of hundred," answered Walter, absent-mindedly.

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the messenger, half-involuntarily; "it's a long way off." Then he sighed and said to himself: "Poor Rose! it 'ould break her heart."

"Really, George, you musn't take my opinion as final," stammered Walter, anxious to save the feelings of a man who was suddenly revealed to him as a fellow-sufferer. A chord of sympathy was touched.

"I just thought I'd ask. I told Rose you'd know, surely."

"It's difficult to wait, but you'll have to learn," suggested Walter, merely to say something.

"But poor Rose; she loves me so."

"Be satisfied, then," was the quick rejoinder. "A good girl's love is a fortune in itself. Treasure it in your heart, and you're the richest man in the street."

Then he clapped his hat on his head and started for the door, muttering:

"Confound the fellow, he almost makes me preach."

George Cole locked up the doors, and carefully brushed his hat on his coat sleeve in the hall.

A few minutes later he was climbing the stairs to the top floor of a neighboring building, where lived gentle old Tidd, its janitor. The house was filled with brokers' offices, into all of which Tidd would penetrate ere long to clear up the wreck of the day.

Personal integrity is rarely rated at its full value in

this world. Here was a man who for twenty years had carried the keys to every office in this large building, who entered after all the proprietors and clerks had gone at night and before they returned in the morning. His methodical ways had counteracted numberless instances of neglect in others. Money, bonds, checks, receipts and valuable letters had been rescued from the paper mill by him. He never meddled, never read anything that was intended for other eyes, never pilfered even an envelope or a newspaper from the rooms he had under his care. He was a model janitor.

His daughter Rose was a bright girl of sixteen, who had grown up high above the smoke and turmoil of Wall Street—in a pure atmosphere that the struggling slaves of Mammon never breathed. The few hours each day that she passed at school were all that were taken from her attendance on the household duties, and devotion to young George Cole. He climbed to good Janitor Tidd's attic every afternoon after his day's service was complete. There he was treated as one of the family.

"What's wrong, George?" asked Rose, anxiously, the moment her lover entered that evening.

She was putting the cups on the table for the early supper which the family's peculiar hours of labor rendered necessary. Their work began when that of the tenants ended, and often continued until late at night.

"Why, Rose, just think of it; Mr. Rawson says I

must earn two hundred dollars a week before we can marry."

And the silly fellow was on the verge of shedding tears.

"Is that all? Well, he don't know anything about it. Come, set the chairs up on that side."

"But we must wait, Rose."

"Yes, a few years perhaps, but not until your wages are at that figure."

The family entered, and the guest sat down with its members to sup.

Walter Rawson had come to New York with a few thousand dollars of ready money, which, fortunately, had not been on deposit in the Limestone Bank. Most of this sum he still had, and with it he hoped to retrieve his shattered finances. His interest in Professor Morton's invention had been forgotten. Walter had never seriously regarded it as assets, because he had not gone through bankruptcy. Probably he had not learned that the possession of stock certificates, costing little, but representing large sums on their face, is one of the modern methods employed by insolvent speculators to account for absent funds.

One day he received a letter from Professor Morton. It was postmarked Vienna, where he was exhibiting his speaking telephone at an international fair. Before a week all Europe was excited about the invention. Every mail from Europe brought news about the wonderful machine. Secret agents of large capitalists came to New York to buy all the shares that could be found.

Almost before he knew of the demand the price rose to the fabulous figure of $2,000 per share.

Rawson looked over his boxes and found one thousand shares, and with a wisdom far beyond his experience, he allowed a covetous world to have the stock at that price, through a half dozen discreet brokers, in such a way that his ownership was never suspected.

Walter Rawson quietly deposited his two millions in four banks, and pursued the dreary routine of his office work. He was not slow, however, to take advantage of all information gained through his connection with the house of Dobell & Co. to operate for his own advantage. The rules of the office prohibited it, but arbitrary laws bind no man's conscience. An instance will suffice. A prominent customer of the firm and a director of the Harlem Railroad was closeted with Dobell one day. He left an order to buy several thousand shares of Harlem stock. Fort Sumter had been fired on a month before; business was in confusion, and the buying of any stock for a rise appeared madness. Walter understood the situation, however. He recognized the purchaser's "inside" sources of information.

He went out to luncheon at noon, and drawing his check for $22,000, ordered his confidential broker to buy him two thousand shares of Harlem for cash. From $11 the stock rose in five weeks to $87 per share, at which price he sold out, realizing profits to the amount of $150,000. Prosperity did not make him vain. His caution and silence were such that his

fellow-clerks did not suspect the financial giant that was nursing in their fold.

His twenty-second birthday found him the possessor of two millions and a half of money, all self-acquired. Still he retained his clerkship at Dobell's, and drew his weekly salary of $20 with the utmost punctuality. About that time an interesting incident occurred. Walter was lunching at Delmonico's on Beaver Street. A friendly hand touched him on the shoulder and a cheerful voice said :

"How are you, Walter ?"

"Well ; but very busy," answered the young man, turning to find Violet's father by his side.

"I'm sorry we don't see you at the house as often as we'd like, my boy."

"Indeed, Mr. Vreeland !"

"Yes ; Violet and her mother often speak of you, and complain that you are attending so closely to business that you forget all your old friends. You must come up," and the social diplomatist moved off before Walter had time to stammer a reply.

As the moth returns to the flame, so does the lover to his lady. Walter was so overjoyed that he did not stop to ascertain that old father Vreeland was a director of a bank which had half a million of his money. So long as Violet had appeared indifferent to his visits, Walter thought he had successfully mastered his affection for her ; but now that he had even an indirect intimation that she loved him, he forgave all the heartache that he had charged to her account. In the

impetuosity of his devotion he did the weak act of his life. How could Walter seek for hidden motives in a heart that he had studied from boyhood?

"Dear girl, I always thought she loved me," he explained to himself. Then he concluded, more thoughtfully, "I'll make another appeal to chance—I'll marry her."

CHAPTER XIV.

PROFESSIONAL PLATITUDES.

"I CONFESS to being entirely baffled," said ex-Surgeon-General Prentiss, as he sank into one of the great arm-chairs in Cotton Mather's smoking-room at "The Willows" after dinner.

"You surely understand something of her malady by this time?" queried the host.

"Candidly, no. She is absolutely controlled by impulse—a slave to the unexpected."

The eminent specialist in nervous diseases delighted in epigram. If *he* only understood what his well-turned phrases meant he made himself sufficiently clear. The less others comprehended him, the more exalted ideas they generally had of his scholarship. But he was now addressing a different sort of person from the usual hypochondriac, a hard-headed man of trade who thought all epigrams were riddles. Therefore, without evincing the slightest admiration, the merchant said:

"Yes, yes, I know. But, doctor, what the devil is the matter with the girl?"

"I regret to say I cannot diagnosticate her case," answered the specialist in nervous and mental diseases,

considerably taken aback by the blunt manner of his companion.

"But surely you can offer some advice?" suggested Mather, with a slowness that implied both surprise and disgust.

"To indicate the difficulty of my task," began the physician, now on his mettle, "let me sketch out to you the facts as I have classified them after ten days of careful observation. When I first came to your house, ostensibly as your guest, I studied Miss Mootla, to detect, if possible, whether she suspected or had divined the object of my visit. At the end of forty-eight hours I was satisfied that she was thoroughly ignorant of your motive in sending for me. I began to think that I had a simple case of excessive vitality, as it were—to make myself clear to you. The cause did not concern me at that time, for I preferred to reason back from effect to cause."

"Well, how did you go about it?" exclaimed Mather, restlessly knocking the ash off his cigar.

"I cultivated her society as much as possible, without obtruding myself on her," continued the physician, affecting not to notice the interruption. "Here was a rather handsome young lady, perfectly healthy in body, but erratic and odd in her habits. Contrast, for instance, her apparent health with her capricious, even fantastic appetite. One day all food on the table is palatable; the next meal nothing pleases her. You will recall the circumstance of her dropping a glass of claret while at dinner on Monday?"

"Certainly, a trifling accident, liable to occur to anybody," was the somewhat sullen reply.

"There you are mistaken. I was observing her carefully at the moment. She let go the glass—I mean, purposely dropped it on the floor. That, too, without tasting the wine. For an instant her command over herself was magnificent. Nothing could exceed the calmness with which she covered up the results of the curious impulse to which, only an instant before, she had slavishly yielded. The impassibility with which she said to your butler, 'Another glass, Robert, almost deceived me. You will admit that the incident hardly occasioned a passing thought."

"It really did not," rejoined Mather, manifesting more interest in the physician's conversation.

"I have observed that she has a marked relish for vinegar and all kinds of sour fruits, and also that the anæmia thus induced augments her distemper. Her character is full of color—I might say, *bizarre*. Her affections are as deep as her hatreds; both classes of emotions seem readily within reach at an instant's notice—'on tap,' as it were, to make myself clear. Her charming and gentle disposition in the morning changes to gross incivility, without warning and generally without provocation. Her self-love is simply extravagant; but she is not incapable of the most disinterested acts."

"You are severe; but, upon my soul, I believe you are just," exclaimed the merchant, thoughtfully. He was probably going over in his mind the scene in the

drawing-room when Mootla wounded his own vanity so deeply.

"The psychological novelties of the case are the exaggerated exhibitions of terror, joy, jealousy, love or rage, always out of proportion to the importance of the event evoking them, and sometimes an emotion directly contrasting with the natural one is seen. The most trifling event is enough to provoke enthusiasm or despair.

Nobody I ever knew could cry so easily or laugh so soon afterward. She has no idea of the simplicity of life, but makes of it a complication. Existence appears to her mind like a scene in a theatre. The regular every-day routine is transformed into a series of grave events, adapted to all manner of dramatic embellishments. Comedy, tragedy and the flat scenes of reality are all on the same plane. Has she ever been in love, Mather?" asked the doctor, giving an abrupt turn to the conversation.

"No, I am sure she has not," answered the merchant, but after a moment's pause he resumed long enough to say: "Unless –but I must not be ridiculous," and he chuckled to himself.

"I think I divine your thought. You would say 'Unless with the sacred cow.' Exactly the idea. That was an excellent example of exaggerated affection. The grand passion would produce a very different effect on her. But you are right, sir; I had answered the query in my own mind before I asked you. Mootla has never been in love! Such questions

must be conclusively determined in a diagnosis of a case of hereditary hysteria, such as hers is.*. Distempers of this kind have long been classed among erotic diseases, but wrongly, I am satisfied. That hysteria is a nervous affection no longer admits of reasonable doubt."

To judge by his twistings and turnings in the great arm-chair he occupied, Mather was in danger of an attack of the same complaint.

"What is the trouble with Mootla? What is hysteria—how did she get it?" exclaimed the merchant, so seriously that the doctor was for an instant on the verge of subjecting himself to an unceremonious kicking through the door by laughing outright in the merchant's face. The struggle to keep back the smiles was almost too much for him, and nothing but the summary treatment which he knew his host capable of inflicting enabled him to control himself.

Cotton Mather was unlike his father in that respect; he could not endure ridicule. That was the only means of attack that aroused his anger; under its lash his temper became ungovernable. Even Mootla ventured upon that method of subjection with great tact and more discretion than she showed in any other way.

The distinguished surgeon grappled with the first part of the merchant's question more heroically than he would otherwise have done, in the hope of sooner

* According to *L' Union Medicale*, January, 1844, the cure for hysterical women is to direct them to take champagne twice a day, but always out of a teacup.

forgetting its final clause and the manner in which it had been addressed to him. He hastened to say :

"Two opposite forces control or direct the acts of every human being—sentiment and will. The will enables us to command ourselves, as well as others. Sentiment, or to make myself clear, I may say judgment (or even discretion, to generalize) should direct the will. It indicates what is wise to tell, what to suppress ; what emotions to obey, and what to reject. The absence of will in persons afflicted as Mootla is, soon destroys all discretion, and sentiment becomes merely whim. They do not comprehend what is meant by the power of ruling the passions. Like the hasheesh eaters, they float with the tide of fancy or enthusiasm. To them there seems to be no transition era between laughter and tears, despair and satisfaction."

"You have given me enough science, sir. I acquit you of a lack of observation, God knows ; but, surely, you can tell me what I can do to check the progress of the distemper," said Mr. Mather, very seriously.

"I fear that I can do little for her. It is possible that more excitement or society than she sees here might change the current in which her mind seems drawn. If she could be induced to surrender to some grand passion ; in fine, if she could start on a happy married life by eloping with the man she loved, she would prove a model wife—she would be cured."

"Then you would recommend——"

"Marriage, sir."

Just as the diagnosis was complete, Mootla sprang

into the room through an open window, and said, cheerily:

"Doctor, you are a specialist in mental disorders. Can you tell me why the eating of corrosive sublimate produces insanity in the cockroach?"

"What!" almost gasped the physician, realizing that Mootla had overheard his previous remarks.

"Yes; I began by feeding one of my pet cockroaches rat poison. It was fatal. Then I tried another on corrosive sublimate. It made him crazy as a hoodlum. The wretched roach tumbled somersaults, and it would not have required a Commission in Lunacy to adjudge him mad. I have started a private asylum for insane bugs. I am in search of a specialist."

The physician was nonplussed, but the merchant was highly amused. It did not require an "expert" to see that he enjoyed the rough handling "his wicked little girl" was giving the learned gentleman.

"You surprise me, Miss Mootla; you are, indeed, quite an experimentalist," stammered the doctor.

All this rattling badinage of the girl's, he comprehended, showed off his scientific disquisition in a ridiculous light. There was no stopping Mootla, now that she was started.

"The merit of my school of alienism is that I start toward the cure with a perfect knowledge of what has produced the disturbance in my patient. That is half the science of medicine, you doctors all admit. If I only knew the 'why,' which I had hoped you could give me, every link in my system of medicine would be

complete. If corrosive sublimate produces insanity in a healthy organism, of course it would cure it in a diseased mind."

"Have you effected any cures?" asked the Surgeon-General with as much good humor as he could command.

"Let me think. Oh, yes, there was case No. 19—a complete triumph. The patient was a black beetle. He wouldn't touch the specific. For him not to eat it was for me to lose a patient. Old practitioners say they 'lose a patient' when he dies, but we of the new school lose him only when he resolutely refuses to get sick. Do you follow me?"

"I think so," stammered the physician as their eyes met.

"Well, how did you act?" asked Cotton Mather, earnestly, manifesting much more interest in Mootla's banter than he had in the "guaranteed" medical knowledge of the ex-Surgeon-General.

"It was an inspiration, uncle. I remembered that one can eat anything with plenty of curry. So I brought some from the kitchen and sprinkled the specific with it. The gentleman beetle ate ravenously, and I had him under a padded thimble-case in half an hour. He was roaring, raging crazy——"

"You use the pronoun 'he' in describing your patient. You should not be so cruel to the male sex."

"Well, I spoke of the beetle as 'he,' perhaps, because he opened his mouth at the wrong time," she answered, quick as a flash.

"And you cured him of the madness!"

"Perfectly."

"Give us the treatment."

"Certainly, in professional confidence. I took a very fine and sharp scissors and clipped off his head neatly."

Cotton Mather went into a convulsion of laughter.

"It was all one whether you did it neatly or not," quickly suggested the ex-Surgeon-General, thinking he saw an uncovered spot on which a foil's point might reach his masked antagonist.

"To the patient, yes; but to the science of surgery, no. As a beetle he was worthless; but as evidence of the efficacy of the cure I labeled him and pinned him to the wall."

"Sad fate."

"True; but it serves him right for coming within range of science——"

The housemaid entered to announce that the carriage was at the door, and ex-Surgeon-General Prentiss drew his watch much as he might have drawn a weapon of defence, to say:

"Bless me! I have only eight minutes to make the train!"

Mootla bowed coolly, turned sharply on her heel, went quickly through the door and into the conservatory, muttering:

"Idiot, ass—the spy!"

Cotton Mather hustled his "expert" into the carriage with less ceremony than usual, shut the door

rather more abruptly than was his wont, and in a tone of ambiguous significance shouted to the coachman :

"Drive hard, Patrick ; don't miss the train."

Each member of that trio was alone for at least an hour.

The distinguished surgeon was still blushing at his discomfiture. His chief consolation was found in the thought that he could square his account with the family by presenting an inordinately large bill for services.

Cotton Mather had enjoyed without comprehending the by-play. He admired Mootla more than ever. She, on the other hand, was the only one who knew exectly what she was about. She was seated in the conservatory, viciously tearing some flowers to pieces, stamping her foot, repeating, again and again :

"Confound his impudence."

The subject was only referred to after several weeks, and by Mootla. One evening as they walked on the lawn, she asked Mr. Mather :

"What is the punishment meted out to spies ?"

"Death," was the innocent reply.

"And very justly," commented she.

Here the subject of Mootla's health dropped for all time. The merchant allowed the incident to pass into forgetfulness. He had every confidence that she would outgrow her bodily ailment. He arranged his business affairs, and then suggested a trip to Europe.

Mootla seized on the project with avidity. They sailed in a steamer from Boston. After a brief stay in

Paris, guardian and ward went to Nice, where the winter was passed. Thither it is not the purpose of this narrative to follow them. The Americans attracted much attention. Mootla, in the full bloom of womanhood, was to be met every bright afternoon on the Promenade des Anglais, taking the air. Long drives on the Cornice road, frequent jaunts to Monaco, many daylight excursions on the water and by land, and numberless garden parties at night, with all the accompaniments of colored lanterns, music and dancing, made this winter season the happiest of Mootla's life. The improvement in her health was so remarkable that Cotton Mather already declared himself to be the greatest "specialist" living.

Miss Daisy Miller, an alleged American girl, was met several times during the season; but Mootla resolutely kept the presumptuous young person out of her set. The Boston girl could not tolerate the greasy Italians and impoverished Englishmen who were constantly seen in the lady's company. The courier who kept such scandalous espionage on Miss Miller, Mootla denounced without hesitation as a blackmailer and a rascal. Mootla was slightly the elder of the two women, and was infinitely the superior of Miss Miller in intelligence, education and tact.

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY OF DAYS.

WALTER could not sleep. His dreams were filled with the direst forebodings of coming evil. He stood on the brink of a yawning precipice, over which a host of young nymphs gleefully strove to hurl him. Next, he was gazing from the window of a vast drawing-room that overlooked this gulf. He was entirely alone. The wailing wind, which he had heard so plainly, died away, and to his surprise a musical theme that took possession of his thoughts communicated itself to the atmosphere. He inhaled melody with the air. Obedient to his lightest fancy, the overture of "Zampa" succeeded the Jewel Song from "Faust." How rapturous a place! A shadow swept across the apartment. A wondrously beautiful woman, dressed in floating drapery of coral pink and white, approached noiselessly, and, without observing him, stood gracefully at his side. The delicate lines of her figure, the glowing color of her fair skin, could be clearly discerned beneath the shadowy folds of her veil-like robes. Her face was indeed so dazzling that in his rapture he heard no longer the fairy anthem to which she had entered. So close was she to him, he could feel the warmth of her presence. Motionless, she gazed into the distance, far beyond the

clouds. She discovered him, and, with a smile that promised heaven, welcomed him. He was about to speak, when she turned upon him impetuously. One side of her face was a grinning skull! And with a jeering laugh—an echo straight from hell—she sprang through the window into the abyss. He hid his face in his hands, and, shivering with terror, fell—sprawling out of bed.

Walter made no further attempt at rest. He lit his gas, partially dressed, and sat down by the fireside to think. It was only four o'clock. And he was to be married at eleven in the morning. On the brink indeed, of a new existence.

The last hours of bachelorhood embody the doubts and the hopes of a lifetime. Far more momentous to a young man seems the step about to be taken than to a maiden. He realizes beforehand the radical change in his habits; she, not until afterward—often, never. To him, care; to her, irresponsibility. To him, the end of youth; to her, the beginning. With him the double state is relative; with her, absolute. To him, marriage is a crisis; to her, destiny. To him, the mingling of the two lives seems accidental; to her, Nature's own sweet will.

Walter clung to a cigar he had lighted longer than usual, almost burning his fingers in trying to keep it in his possession. He looked over his wardrobe and linen for the last time, adding to the gifts he had already laid aside for the clever fellow who served him in the double capacity of janitor and valet.

Here was a bundle of photographs—girlish faces, bright and fair. He lingered over the memories they awakened. Secrets all, and sacred. He couldn't destroy them even now. A glove, too—a white glove, soiled and torn. Ah! he remembered. It was hers; as soft as the velvety flesh it had covered. He had begged it of Nannie—poor Nannie, where is she now?—that he might send her a dozen in its stead. Those spots—were prints of his kisses. This rent—made by him as he pretended to assist in removing it from her hand. And it would have to go into the fire? Ah! how near to every joy is an attendant sorrow!

These were his last hours as a squire, awaiting admission to the order of knighthood.

He was watching his arms, alone with their memories, conformable to the chivalry of his time.*

Dawn! The first light of his wedding-day. Why his anxiety? A church ceremony was no new sensation, surely. He had witnessed many of them. Ah! but this was to be his own wedding. There *was* a difference in that.

. . . . . .

"Put McGinnis in the dock!" shouts the District-Attorney.

The prisoner takes his place. He has been indicted for murder in the first degree.

"Cheer up, man," whispers his counsel, smiling. "The trial will be very short."

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* See revised editions of Amadis de Gaul and Don Quixote.

"Don't be in a hurry, for there's a halter at the end for me."

. . . . . .

A marriage ceremony at Grace Church. This was not the first one. The custom of marrying will never go out of fashion, and there'll be many imposing ceremonials in the future; and yet they will not equal this one in dignity, for Ambergris, the presiding genius of church weddings, is now dead. There will never be another Ambergris. But he was alive when Walter married Violet.

Like the enterprising sextons who furnish "a whole funeral" at a fixed price, Ambergris often contracted to supply a complete wedding. He was, certainly, the most important functionary of the church. Rectors and choristers came and went, but Ambergris moved up and down the aisles perennially. Quite as many strangers went to Grace Church to see him as to hear the sermons. A wedding occasion showed him at his best. His usefulness began with the delivery of the cards of invitation—a pleasant service which he discharged with uniform satisfaction. The decoration of the edifice could, with equal confidence, be left to his discretion. He always reached the church about one hour before the time fixed for the ceremony, and the doors were never opened until he arrived.

In this instance it was Violet's wish to be married by candle-light. Ambergris caused all the windows to be hung with heavy draperies, and two thousand candles of the purest wax sparkled under the vaulted ceiling

like a nebulous procession of stellar worlds. The invited guests streamed into the church at the great doorway. Long lines of carriages were striving to set down their occupants nearest the carpeted pavement. Crowds of idle spectators, culled by natural selection from the flood tide on Broadway, jostled each other near the door—men, women, children ; maids who wished to see a fellow-mortal on the way to the altar ; men who could well spare the time they had no other way of wasting.

Through the portals, out of the sunshine into the oppressive haze of the parish church, moved the steadily advancing host of invited guests.

Ambergris stood at the inner door, the Napoleon of the hour—the only obstacle between the perfect order that reigned and a mad rush for favored places. He directed the ushers with marvelous calmness and skill. "Friends of the bride ?"—to the right. "Relatives of the husband ?"—to the left centre. Here, there, everywhere, never anywhere, he placed the orderly multitude.

Soon the edifice was full. Then was Ambergris in his glory. Then became apparent the majesty of his art. He understood the advantages of a crowded building. He knew it would be filled, for theatrical managers are not the only people who "paper their houses" on great occasions. So he went on for twenty minutes, after every pew was apparently filled, seating all who came. Contrary to the general belief, late arrivals are the delight of a professional like Ambergris.

Suddenly every whisper ceased. A signal to the organist; Mendelssohn's magic march music floated out over the great congregation, through the pillars and arches; a draught of cold air from the street; the heavy curtains parted, and the bride, on the arm of her father, entered. The procession formed by "the high contracting parties" and the bridesmaids and groomsmen moved slowly to the altar. "Who giveth this woman in marriage?" Rightly enough, the one man who knew her whims and extravagances. And the father bestowed his daughter as freely as God had given her to him. The ring was handed about until it rested firmly on the finger of the bride. The final prayer was said, and Walter and Violet rose from their knees, husband and wife.

All Walter's gloomy visions of the night had vanished into the thin air of dreamland—forgotten in the new emotions of the moment.

The pair had hardly left the church before this most orderly of assemblages joined in a wild rush for the street to get a last look at the bride.

The couple were driven away from the church, apparently to the railroad station. In reality, they merely went to a fashionable hotel on Broadway, where, unknown to their friends, they passed a fortnight of unalloyed happiness. A trip to Niagara, a voyage down the St. Lawrence, and a week at the quaint old city of Quebec completed the bridal moon.

On his return to the city, Walter Rawson purchased a seat in the Exchange, and fitted up a suit of offices,

where, until after the close of the Civil War, he devoted himself closely to business. One of the features he introduced was direct communication with his principal customers, by private wire. He was alert, intelligent, competent.

He was, in addition, a student of his time.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ESTATE OF POLITICS.

THE smoke of a hundred battles had barely cleared away. Four years of sorrow and poverty among the multitude had assisted in the distribution of vast wealth among a few men. A new order of society had arisen —the political estate.

It had been born and developed while the nation was convulsed with civil war. It had entrenched itself while the patriotic people of the country were zealously engaged in the life or death struggle; and thus it had escaped observation. Its only loyalty had been devotion to self. Its leaders had interested themselves in the commercial phases of the conflict. They had gambled on the destiny of the nation. On early and secret information of a crushing defeat to the Federal arms, they had bought gold for a rise. This they called "Discounting the Dead." Selling the market for a decline on the eve of a brilliant victory was described as "Coppering the Government."

Having risen, phœnix-like, from ashes and blood, this new estate of man spread its wings for the royal flight of the eagle.

But victories or defeats no longer afforded means for

advancing or depressing the national honor. Other methods of progress must be devised.

Meanwhile, the clan pushed its trustiest representatives to the front of the councils of the state. It asserted its right to a share in the ruling of the nation, to recognition in the framing of the foreign, as well as domestic, policy.

Some of its members were worth millions, though innocent of any moral conception of the patience and toil attending the usual methods of amassing wealth. They were as ostentatious as if they had gathered their money according to the strictest integrity ; and in the rush for lucre that set in, not a few upright men, who had made the world's fight with only moderate success, envied them in their hearts.

These the distinctive types of the men who assumed to rule the nation :

First :—The Timocrats, represented by two classes :

(1.)—The commercial nabob. Having spies in every public department, and at the headquarters of every army corps, he utilized every act of the Government in Wall Street, just as he had the victories and defeats during the rebellion. He was not a hypocrite. He was the originator and the financial backer of the prevalent and shameless traffic in office, and dealt in politics as in guano. He hoped for the establishment of a government by the rich.

(2.)—The professional statesman. Under the guise of public service, he assisted in the impoverishment of the struggling nation. He went to Congress to be use-

ful to the other members of the clan, and often grew shrewder and richer than the men who started him on his infamous career. He entrenched himself on one of the committees, such as Finance, Railroads, Postal Affairs, Navigation, or Public Lands, and thereafter played with loaded dice against the people whose votes had elevated him to the post he dishonored. He was meaner than the professional gambler, who discountenances marked cards. The honest and toiling tradesmen of the nation took the risks of business, while this creature took none. Even the nabob, the vulgarest parvenu—who had furnished the money that first corrupted him—despised the professional statesman for his demagoguery and hypocrisy. He hated him, also, because the servant had grown beyond the control of the master in riches and power.

Second—The Professional Hero. He had hung by favor to the skirts of the real soldiers of the civil war, risking little, having nothing to lose, not rich, but willing, yea, mad to be so. Generally without trade, profession, or visible means of support, he had to be disposed of by the creation of numberless foreign consulates, or stowed away in the railroad offices controlled by the men whose secrets he largely shared. Many of his kind were constantly to be found in New York and Washington, waiting, hoping, but never discouraged. They were the medium of communication between the commercial and legislative branches of the estate of politics. They were ready for any radical change in government or society. An aristocracy or a dictator-

ship would have delighted these free lances of fortune. Peace restored, the sudden and startling fluctuations in the price of "gold" came to an end. The course of the Pactolian river shifted. The great speculators ceased trading in gold—abandoning that amusement to the small board-room dealers who "scalped the market" for the eighths and quarters of one per cent.

The nabobs and their followers plunged pell-mell into railroad speculation. Walter Rawson was now on their track. He kept close at their heels, and never lost sight of them for a moment. He had watched the rise of this new clan. He gauged well the shrewdness of its members and estimated to a nicety the boundless wealth it represented. He had decided to make these sheep his mutton in the future.

The nation was awake; trade began to revive. All eyes were turned toward the railroads of the land. The people craved excitement and speculation supplied it. The stock list—beginning with half a dozen express and steamship companies—grew downward as name after name was added, like a banyan tree, but rank and noxious as the upas.

The development of vast systems of internal communication evolved still another race from the regions of the unknown—men of boundless ambition, of limitless and apparently intuitive possibility and unquestionable nerve. Among them were a few who originated brilliant schemes and altered geography so deftly that their fellow-citizens whom they impoverished were amazed and gratified.

The contagion spread to the other side of the Atlantic. The Gulf Stream changed its course, pouring its warming, cheering millions of English gold upon our shores. What a rivalry!

Were the Britons to reconquer the States? Was America to be outdone on its own ground by foreigners? Never!

Boxes that hadn't been opened for a generation were forced; mortgages were converted into cash; government bonds were hypothecated. Everybody engaged in the mad purchase of railroad securities.

It was as easy to build a line of railway as to kick a sheep. All that was required was cash enough to pay the engraver, map-maker, and printer, and in nine cases out of ten, these persons accepted their wages in stock certificates.

All schemes, however chimerical, could command support. No dream was so wild that its real or fancied claims failed of recognition somewhere, though the methods of the "promoters" were as crooked as the routes of their roads.

For instance, to select the worthiest of all the enterprises of the period, a line of rails had been projected across the plains to California. A few men decided that it must be built. Congress was asked and actually gave away thousands of acres to the mile. Though they loved their country, the promoters knew what a mile meant. They had a system of mathematics of their own. Axioms were converted into paradoxes. "The shortest distance between two points is *not* measured

on the straight line that joins them," said they. To dogmatically assert the contrary was to confess one's self no wiser than Euclid—a mere teacher in an Egyptian school. He never built a railroad that had a land-grant of 12,000 acres to the mile! He might have done very well, they were willing to admit when a street-car route was to be laid out in Alexandria, but for a great national enterprise, such as this—why, he never "sized up" to it. The road was run with as many "lines of beauty" as possible, so that there might be more miles and more land.

Then these gentlemen hired a company of themselves to build the road at an extravagant price; and paid themselves in bonds and stock at a low valuation. Having sold all the best public lands to themselves, for as little as they dared, they resold them to the railroad for whatever they chose to ask. The same was true of every tie and rail laid, every spike driven, and every piece of rolling-stock purchased. The profits of these transactions were known by various names. Professional statesmen spoke of them as "loans;" the military adventurers as "commish;" and the nabobs as "rebate." Forty millions of people—who did not share in these profits—scandalously dubbed them "steals."

The system was such a thoroughly practical one for getting rich, that the few persons who managed the national, state, and municipal politics introduced it everywhere.

Millions of British capital continued to flow into the

United States seeking investment in the many new and projected lines of railway. Walter Rawson's inspiration was to divert this current into channels that he controlled. He looked over the ground carefully, with the aid of a trusty agent or two.

Much of this money, he discovered, was being swallowed up in the completion of a line running from Ovieda to one of the largest cities in the West, called the Dawn and Sunset Railway. This road had been surveyed and mostly graded prior to the war, but it had languished until the revival of the speculative craze, when it had been caught up and completed off-hand with funds from England. The enterprise was pushed forward with such an utter disregard of expense that before the last spike was driven its affairs were hopelessly involved. Here was the opportunity Walter Rawson had foreseen and awaited. What passes current for genius is often cold-blooded premeditation. By means of a foreclosure suit, which he brought as a bondholder (for anybody could be a bondholder), he was able to procure from an Ohio judge an order for the immediate sale of the road and rolling stock. Pending the auction, one of Rawson's confidants was appointed receiver, and the financial condition of the Dawn and Sunset Company became a dead secret.

The sale occurred at a city recently christened Buffland* on a raw November morning. Twenty millions had been spent on the road, but the bondholders saw

* In a social treatise called "The Breadwinners."

no prospects of its paying fixed charges, not to speak of dividends on the stock. Not wishing to see their property rights sacrificed, however, they had appointed a committee to bid in the road if it went too cheaply. Local railways that paralleled or crossed the great trunk line had their delegates on the ground, in the hope that amid the general wreck they might catch some bit of salvage.

For the first quarter of an hour the conflicting local interests wrestled with each other. Their representatives were timid, and some of them bid in the half-hearted, cautious way that indicated a fear that the road might be knocked down to them unawares. The agent of the Three X's dropped out at four millions. Then the bondholders' spokesman came to the front, and the price was slowly advanced eight hundred thousand dollars, at which point there came a lull. The road was about to be bought in.

On the edge of the crowd that gathered 'round the sheriff's auctioneer stood a man above medium height, enveloped in a dull gray overcoat, and whenever the auctioneer glanced in his direction he looked as innocent as a city salesman on his first visit to a country village. But this stranger only waited to hear the auctioneer say "Going" once when he manifested an uncommon, and, so far as could be judged by others, an unwarranted interest in the proceedings. He promptly added $25,000 to the last bid. Then he stood a raise of $15,000, and went $5,000 better. Now all eyes were centered on him, and everybody was asking his

neighbor who the stranger was. Nobody knew. That was his strong point! Nor did they know that he had carefully walked or driven along the entire line of the road within a month previous, and was as well informed of its actual condition as if he had built it. After some slow work the stranger shouted: "Forty-nine hundred thousand."

Then the bondholders withdrew for consultation. Even the auctioneer slowly repeated the bid with a strong rising inflection—"Forty-nine hundred thousand?" When he had done so several times, the stranger vouchsafed the simple but firm rejoinder. "That was *my* bid!" The bondholders' committee returned to the charge, and the stranger stepped nearer to the auctioneer, so as to confront his antagonists. By gradual steps the two rivals ran up the price to an even $5,000,000, and the climax was reached by the unknown adding $10,000 to that amount before the auctioneer had time to cry the previous bid. The determination he displayed ended the sale at this point. Almost hesitatingly, the sheriff's auctioneer declared the Dawn and Sunset Railway sold for $5,010,000. The sheriff then asked the stranger his name, but was no wiser when he heard it. "Walter Rawson," was the reply; but his actions spoke trumpet-toned, for, entering the sheriff's office, he drew from an inside pocket of the capacious overcoat a bundle of exactly $100,000 in crisp registered government bonds. The sale was legally certified, subject to a further payment of $4,910,000.

There is a vast difference between a great specimen of characterization and a great character. In reality Rawson was only a man whose life was a romance, because he grappled and dealt adequately with extraordinary times and events.

Rawson had according to the terms of sale only three months in which to raise nearly five million dollars. But he was shrewd enough to know that if it could be done at all the time was ample. Money is always obtainable for any scheme where the investor can be shown that he will double his holdings in six months.

The rest of the story regarding the rehabilitation of the Dawn and Sunset Railway is brief enough. Walter Rawson hurried to New York, placed his plan before a half dozen of the leading bankers of the metropolis, organized a "syndicate" (as such a combination was afterward called) that took new bonds and stock enough to supply the purchase money and yet to leave him two million as a balance to his personal credit. The preferred stock was allotted to "the insiders" at $40, but it rose to $60 per share within a few days after it was put on the market. The money which he had derived from his own bonds Walter promptly reinvested in the shares of the corporation at "inside" prices, and thereby secured more profit than any other individual. He elected himself a director, and at once set about carrying out a grand ambition known only to himself. This scheme was nothing less magnificent than the leasing of the Dawn and Sunset Road to the Cyclops Railway. The latter trunk line started from the

metropolis, traversed two of the most important states of the Union, and sought an adequate terminus in the rapidly developing Western country. A double result from such a lease was inevitable. A guarantee of seven per cent. on the Dawn and Sunset bonds by the Cyclops Company would lift the preferred stock of the former road to $90, while the drain upon the parent corporation, caused by assuming this new burden, would depreciate its bonds and stocks and hasten untimely collapse.

Walter Rawson reorganized the Dawn and Sunset management. He created a board of directors to suit his tastes, naming among them two already notorious members of the political estate, John Gall and Reuben Pinchover. Then he set about effecting the lease to the Cyclops. A sheaf of proxies in the hands of Gall, Pinchover and other earnest and determined friends sufficed to seat Walter Rawson in the Cyclops board. The invasion attracted little attention, and even such stockholders as grumbled admitted his capacity, when, several months later, it was announced that a lease of the Dawn and Sunset Railway had been secured. It was represented to the financial world as a master stroke—the consummation of a long and delicate negotiation on the part of the older corporation to add a Western feeder. Rawson was such a clever talker that not a man on the Cyclops board, except himself, but thought the lease a benefit.

Thus did Walter Rawson create "The Great Consolidated Cyclops System," giving to New York its first

through trunk line to Cincinnati and St. Louis. A few bold acts had given him large capital as well as power. With these two factors he was ready for the contest with man. He was not a parvenu, however ; he came of a race of money-makers.

There were a few men who stood between him and the game he wanted. They were the marauders of the public lands. He had never shared to the extent of a dollar in their crimes. They were not prepared for such a foe, having only had a lot of venal and deluded men in Congress to cope with. He hoped to take from them their lands and their roads. Having got their railroads he would shoulder them upon the members of the political estate.

In the course of the fulfillment of this ambition, Walter Rawson coined the now famous expression applied to victims of speculation :

"Shearing the lambs."

Embarked on this quest our Argonaut of the nineteenth century changed his policy of life. He strove to make the world hate rather than esteem him. To distrust rather than believe in him. Forever afterward he traded on the "short side" of his own character.

It was a novel idea. We shall see how it prospered.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CAT OF PHAROAH.

REASONS existed for Cotton Mather's visit to Europe, other than his anxiety to have Mootla's health restored. He had become since the close of the Rebellion a thoroughly disgusted and disappointed citizen of the Republic. He hoped, therefore, by travel and absence to restore a faith that was gone. The great and generous Peabody had given up his native land, and Cotton Mather was hopeful that he might fathom the motive therefor.

Cotton Mather's history during the war has not been recited, because it was known throughout the land. A brief reference to that period is only rendered necessary as showing the causes of a radical change of heart. He had stood, firmly as a rock, on the side of the Federal Government. The night after Sumter was fired on he presided at the extraordinary mass meeting in Faneuil Hall, at which Phillips, and Butler, and Everett, and others raised their voices against secession and disunion. A memorial to President Lincoln was prepared, pledging the wealth and the lives of the people of the Commonwealth to the suppression of the Rebellion. Three months later, Cotton Mather equipped a regiment of Massachusetts troops, wholly out of

his own means. Two of his largest ships he presented to the Government for transports. Throughout the long war, he insisted on sending his vessels to sea, in the face of danger from the *Alabama* and *Shenandoah,* so that the American flag should not be forgotten on the ocean. Nearly one-half of this splendid merchant fleet, the greatest this nation has ever known, was burned by the Confederate privateers. Still, he never lamented or lost heart for a moment. All his father's pride of country was rekindled in him.

He did not garner a single dollar during the tempest of death, and would have despised himself had he speculated against the nation in its distress.

When peace was restored, it became with him, more than ever, a fixed theory that all Americans were honest. He was among the earliest to extend the hand of commercial fellowship to the stricken South. In the city of New Orleans alone he put out a line of credit exceeding one million dollars. He found hope for the South everywhere except at Washington.

Clinging to the integrity of democratic form, he was unprepared for the treatment portioned out to the merchants of the North by the Congress of the United States. The neglect of the law-making body became unbearable. The losses inflicted by the piratical cruisers were insignificant compared with the injuries to American commerce imposed by the obnoxious and retrogressive legislation of congress. Blunder succeeded blunder, until every merchant felt justified in presuming malice. Of all branches of national industry, the

carrying trade on the seas had suffered most severely from the civil war. Congress, nevertheless, encouraged the very nation that had covertly and openly aided the cause of disunion, he argued, and took out of American hands the profits of carrying abroad the products of the United States.

Cotton Mather counselled patience. He believed in Congress as he did in constitutional government. He waited. Surely, he thought, some one will check this flux of disastrous legislation. But he saw with consternation the spreading of Congressional indifference, the elevation of blind devotion to party above that to the people. By slow and unwilling steps, and from a point of view widely different to that of Walter Rawson, he was confronted with the political estate.

Thinking that the pernicious legislation was in some measure attributable to the negligence of the merchants in making protest, he went to Washington at the head of a committee composed of the prominent ship owners of this land. There he found the blindest ignorance regarding the trade of the country, attended by what always consorts with that mental state—stubborness.

The Committees on Commerce of both Houses gave the visitors audience, but their members did not evince the slightest interest in the matter, yawned when the merchants spoke, and never referred to the subject in any future session of the committees or on the floor of Senate or House. Several members, when personally visited by Mr. Mather and his coadjutors, even under-

took to argue the desirability of having other nations perform the labor of transportation for the people of this country. They ridiculed the building of vessels out of iron—these men who, in many instances, had never seen any craft save mud scows and canal boats. Nothing was done; but the merchants of New York, Boston and Philadelphia saw new steamship lines started, one after another, on foreign capital and sailing under foreign colors. For, remarkable as it may appear, laws existed absolutely prohibiting American merchants from buying ships where they were cheapest, though any other wares could be purchased in the markets of the world! The corollary of that enactment denied the right of any ship-owner to sail his vessel under the flag of the United States unless she had been built in this land. This, too, at a time when all steamships were made of iron, and there was not a single iron shipyard on the American coast!

Cotemporary with such legislation, he saw politics converted into a national industry. He detected the alliance between the nabob and the professional statesman. His unwilling mind blossomed with surprises. The instant he realized that votes were bought at home he understood why ships had to be purchased abroad.

A venal and demoralizing epigram, "All 's fair in politics," was an accepted, unwritten maxim of state. So corrupted was the popular imagination, so tainted the national pride, so weakened the country's patriotism, that a few bold leaders could have taken the New

England or Pacific States out of the Union almost without Congressional protest. The crushing truth burst upon Cotton Mather one day on Pennsylvania avenue while walking back from the Capitol, and he exclaimed:

"Politics is a trade, like the making of boots and shoes!"

He beheld in the eyes of many men he met an unblushing confession of cupidity and dishonor. He was a keen observer, and, goaded on by indignation, he lost sight of nothing. He saw the good name of his country daily kicked about the corridors and into the dark corners of every committee room in the east and west wings of the Capitol—the football of upstarts whose fathers had been shoeless.

He read, with utter amazement, long discussions regarding the national debt participated in by men who never had enjoyed a bank account before reaching Washington. In fine, he admitted in his heart that if this were not already the most corrupt Government on earth it was on the high road to that distinction. The future looked black. He saw no way of dethroning the Dynasty of the Dregs.

Thus developed one hopeless patriot.

He returned home to his beloved Massachusetts, but grew more despondent every day. He strode about his lawn at "The Willows," sullen and silent, for hours at a time.

Then ex-Surgeon-General Prentiss, another product of the war, came to the homestead in his official capacity

of physiological and psychological expert. His society diverted for a while, but when the practical merchant detected how little he had learned about Mootla's ills and how easily the young patient had rent asunder the specialist's intellectual armor, he voted him a bit of pinchbeck like the rest.

In such a frame of mind he put his affairs in snug condition and sailed for Europe, as we know.

He was received with honor and distinction everywhere. It was a great surprise to him to find that his commercial reputation had preceded him, for he had never known vainglory. But amid all these diversions he could not shake off the malaria that had entered his nature during the winter in which he had studied life in Washington.

One night he was seated in his private parlor in the Hotel des Anglais, at Nice, reviewing the old and painful subject in his mind. Mootla had gone to bed some time before, and he had about finished his final cigar. He felt, as if for the first time, all the indignation of a naturally pure mind when unsuspected betrayal of confidence is detected. By this time, however, he could name names and conjure up at will the faces of the venal ones. Now, he argued with himself, he knew them thoroughly. Nothing more contemptible, he protested, had been encountered in the wide range of his experience than the typical Congressman—nothing that could be traded in easier.

With humiliation and shame, the merchant mentally conned the prices at that great exchange on Capitol

hill. Quotations varied with the activity and gravity of legislation, and the scale of honor moved up or down according to the same laws of supply and demand that fix the market value of coffee or logwood. The transactions were confidential, principally because the public, who supplied the men and the money, could not be allowed to form too cheap an estimate of their representatives. Though daily bought and sold, the Congressional conscience could not endure to be reminded of the transaction. The hide of the professional statesman, too, was as pliable as his conscience, he thought, and as tough as the crocodile's.

"Aye, the crocodile's!" almost shouted Cotton Mather, rising to his feet, and beginning to pace the floor. "The rough-shod reptile! But he has his match, his destroyer, the—the—let me see, the ichneumon! Its presence will drive the crocodile from the swamp of his ancestors. In an unguarded moment of saurian repose, the ichneumon takes a header down his throat. Once there, ha, ha! it leisurely proceeds to eat away his bowels."

The magnitude of this idea exceeded the comprehension of Buffon, who mentions the curious tradition of natural history only to discredit it. Here was the germ of a corrective policy, a practical and radical method of inculcating the doctrines of morality, of teaching men their duty, and at the same time compelling them to do it.

This new ethical philosophy first took form in the exclamation:

"By Jupiter, I'll put the ichneumon on their track!"

Mather tried to calm himself, but it was impossible.

"I see it now," he champed with rage. "It's a new dispensation. Men won't be honest unless forced to be so. I have outlived my time. Theirs has come. If my theory of life be wrong, so is theirs. Men who work no longer get rich. Hail to the politician and the man who owns him. In America everybody is mad. Its social system is warped. Under it fortunes are made in a day—often in an hour. What follows? First, the family is corrupted; then the channels of trade, even of religion, become tainted; next, the bench and the municipal government is contaminated; later the soul of the Commonwealth is rotted out; and, finally, taking lodgment in the national capital, corruption poisons the fountain of civic honor. The professional politician is responsible for this political pyæmia. He needs rebuke; he shall have it. He has robbed me, and allowed another nation to do so. He has insulted me. He will next question my loyalty. D——n him! he must be taught better. His is a low game, but I'll beat it. I'll put an ichneumon inside his carcass!"

And, in his excitement, the old man hurled his lighted cigar against the plate-glass window, supposing it open. Then he went to bed, muttering:

"Crocodiles, alligators—all! But I've got them now!"

Again his mind found voice, as he jerked open his vest in the process of undressing:

"Who knows the expression or feelings of a crocodile with a healthy enemy on the inside? I'll soon know how some of these rascally Congressmen look and act when they're at my mercy. Oh! we shall see. I have been a cursed fool! Ha, ha! The ichneumon! Won't know one when they see him; so innocent, so good, so stupid. Humph!"

As he climbed into bed another idea occurred to him. He'd buy a newspaper—a dozen newspapers, if need be—and turn them loose on his scaly enemies.

His final thoughts might have been a prayer, but the last words be uttered aloud were not. He said:

"I'll go to work at them, and they shall go to the devil!"

Cotton Mather never procrastinated when he had determined on a course of action. He left Nice in a few days, placed Mootla in a school at Mayence, and took passage for New York.

He planned his vengeance during the voyage, and devoted the rest of his life to its execution.

It is one of the mysteries of creation that every species has a natural enemy. Thus was conjured into being these destroyers of the political estate—these two avengers of an outraged nation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TAINT OF AVARICE.

MARRIAGE effected far less change in Walter Rawson's life than he had supposed it would. Business had the same passionate attraction, though he was greatly devoted to his young wife.

With wealth and the smile of society assured, Violet enjoyed the new happiness she had found. In Walter's eyes she developed all the gentleness and affection that her childhood had presaged. She welcomed her visitors to the luxurious apartments at the Brevoort House, where the contented couple dwelt, with the grace and ease of manner inherited from her mother. The Vreeland decorum was the essence of good breeding. It could not be counterfeited. Its reserve was respectful and gracious, without a trace of humility; its egotism could be proud, haughty, even imperious at times. Of Mrs. Vreeland it was said that she never bowed to two people alike.

The formalities of the wedding dinners given to the young couple by the two families may be passed over briefly.

The reception at the Vreeland mansion was managed with all the art of Pinard. The dinner at the old Rawson homestead in Crumpet, whither Walter car-

ried his bride soon after their return, was less ostentatious, but not less enjoyable. It was the last social event of any importance in the life of Mrs. Mary Rawson. She was aware of the value attaching to the reception of the young bride, and nothing was wanting that could contribute to Violet's happiness. If the wife had had any doubts as to the feeling of Walter's mother toward her, they were removed forever.

According to a mutually expressed wish, Walter and Violet lingered for a few days in this village. Together they revisited all the scenes identified with their childhood; they strolled along the paths once kept bare so largely by their own footsteps. There was a pleasant memory at every turn in the road.

They went together to the Vreeland mansion, tenanted at that season only by the old housekeeper. The house was ready for its summer occupants, who were expected in the course of a week or ten days. With all the coyness of a maiden, Violet took her lover husband up to her own room to show him the cage she had occupied from her early girlhood. It was prepared for the habitation of an elder sister, then widowed, but everything yet remained just as Violet had left it. Here was her dressing bureau. The great wardrobes were empty, yearning for the dainty dresses that never would occupy them again. Here, beside the window looking toward the gate, stood her writing desk. It was the outlook, she explained, whence she always descried her lover's coming. Here stood her bed. Walter regarded it with reverence and curiosity. Its delicate lace spread, its

snow-white pillows, exquisitely worked with her name; the curtains that draped it—all were characteristic of Violet. In this room, doubtless, she had often thought of him—perhaps she had even dreamed of him, he ventured, with some diffidence, to ask her. She blushed, went to her writing desk and brought a tiny book in which she had been wont to write furtively. It was not a diary, but a treasury of thoughts that lingered on the page as though they had been carried thither on a moonbeam. She opened it. On the first page that caught his eye, dated "Day of our betrothal," Walter read:

"O Gentle, Gracious One, guardian of my happiness, let no evil wake us from this dream of joy. Watch o'er us——"

"At that point I went to sleep," said Violet, laughing, as she clung to Walter's arm. "I always wrote in this book in bed the last thing at night."

This trifling incident impressed Walter deeply. He turned and surveyed the room. It seemed the most sacred shrine on earth. Never would he destroy that mental picture—never would he enter there again so long as he lived.

. . . . . .

Back in Wall Street, Walter saw that history was making itself very rapidly. He found that the bitterest enmities are contracted in trade. He learned that friendships are as brittle as glass; that honor has a "shave" on the floor of every exchange.

Not far from him, in the same building, he discov-

ered his father's old *protégé*, Catesberry. This enterprising individual was credited with having lost every dollar he had by the robbery of the Limestone Bank. His private box of securities had been found cut open and empty. It was, therefore, a matter of congratulation from his friends that Catesberry's wife had inherited a small amount of money with which she had bought a comfortable property at Fort Washington.

Walter sympathized sincerely with Catesberry, and gladly joined in a movement among the former directors of the dead Limestone Bank to start the unfortunate cashier in life again.

So far as the world knew, Catesberry's character was absolutely above reproach. There was only one man acquainted with his crime, and Gilroy was not likely to appear as his accuser. The ex-cashier felt no anxiety in that quarter. Catesberry had few if any customers, but Rawson contrived to throw considerable business in his way.

About this time there was a great spur given to stock speculation by a single invention. The discovery of America is usually regarded as a rather important historical and commercial event; but to the new estate of man that grows rich without toil the invention of the "stock ticker" outshines the achievement of Columbus. This machine has an overmastering power for good or evil. It is the most gigantic engine that ever was created to serve the speculative purposes of man. It records daily transactions in the city of New

York alone aggregating from fifty to eighty million of dollars.

That it could be used to create and to lead public opinion, instead of merely recording it, Walter saw before it had been in use a week. He recognized its future potency, its universality, and the volume of its voice before he had watched it a fortnight. He saw in it the one essential requisite for the rapid rise and depression of values—publicity, instantaneous and widespread. He saw in it the magician's wand, and he determined to know how to juggle with it.

When the tape ceased to flow from its jaws, Walter turned his thoughts to Violet. He hastened home the instant three o'clock struck. He believed himself madly in love.

What were Violet's ideas of the new condition in which she found herself? She probably had never had a serious thought on the subject. She enlarged rather than contracted the circle of her acquaintance, even angled for admirers among the young men, after the manner of other highly refined and respectable married women. The daily procession of modistes and jewelers' clerks began to move, and her maid soon relinquished her mistress's hair to the hands of a barber.

The first summer she made the acquaintance at Saratoga of a dashing young man of the world. Together they waltzed, together they strolled along the verandas; and when the pretty Violet returned to the city in the autumn she playfully added his name to her list

of devotees. The summer had been an unusually active one in speculation, and Walter had found little spare time to pass with his wife at Congress Hall. She had, however, introduced him to young Oliver Belwar, though Walter had not given him a serious second thought.

But Belwar never lost sight of anybody who could be of future service to him.

During the early part of the winter, Mr. and Mrs. Rawson attended an evening party at the Burleigh's. It was the first regular "affair" of the fashionable season. There was no happier man in the metropolis than the young broker as he handed his pretty wife down from their carriage at the door of the brilliantly lighted mansion. Within the house it was a struggle to reach the cloak-rooms. There, on one floor, the queens of society and a throng of ladies' maids, summoned to assist them, jostled each other; on the next story the gentlemen had all their wants attended to by ebony-hued servants.

This couple had arrived late, for scarcely had Mr. and Mrs. Rawson paid their compliments to the hostess and exchanged salutations with a few acquaintances, before the orchestra was heard and the dancing began. As the magic violin led the waltz, Violet glanced round the large parlors. Her heart gave a start, for she saw among the throng the young man whom she had compelled to walk beside her triumphal car during the length of the Saratoga season. There was something in the calm assurance of his glance that brought the

blood to Violet's cheeks. He was in New York, in her circle of society—face to face. At Saratoga he was well enough; here he was in the way.

No sooner had the music ceased than Mr. Belwar approached and paid his respects to Mrs. Rawson. He was re-introduced to her husband, for Walter had entirely forgotten him. The young man's manners were good; he made himself agreeable at once. He was not so foolish, however, as to mar the advantage he possessed over Violet by remaining long at her side. He said a few pleasant words to the lady, delicately flattered her pride, and then moved away.

They often met during that winter and spring—by chance, apparently, and only for a moment at a time. Whenever Violet drove in the Park in her phaeton alone she was sure to see him; when she was in the brougham by Walter's side, strangely enough, Oliver Belwar's dogcart never was encountered. When she "shopped" at Gourd's, Stalwart's, Bly's, or other fashionable drapers, the young man often happened to be in quest of some trifle of lace or a peculiar shade of kid-gloves ("for a sister at boarding-school," he explained), and sought her taste in preference to his own. At Scruples, whenever new pictures were announced, she encountered him in the same unexpected manner. At Toffey's—they were both seeking wedding presents for friends.

These meetings soon ceased to surprise Violet. She did not mention the incidents to Walter at first, because she attached no importance to them. Soon she felt

differently, and then she dared not tell him. She feared that he would ask, "How long has he been annoying you thus?" or "Why did you not tell me before?" In truth, she was not annoyed. All her vexation had passed away. This harmless intimacy, she reasoned, was the natural outgrowth of the gay season at Saratoga. Many young married women, she knew, made an effort to attach young gentlemen friends to their train. It was not only perfectly proper and highly fashionable to do so, but his society served to relieve many a monotonous hour. She held him, she thought, as well as *ennui*, at arms' length. But now she saw that the fellow was a skilled diplomatist in social life. Until he was sure of his ground, he had been so adroit in his attention that she could not have "cut" him, if she had so wished. The old subterfuge that many an honest woman has employed before Violet's time to rid herself of an over-zealous friend suggested itself—she would marry him out of the way to one of her friends. He bore the name of one of the oldest families in the metropolis, had a private income of his own which, though not very large, was sufficient to support an establishment. This idea, once conceived, relieved her mind for a time; but its natural result was to throw them into each other's society oftener than before. In her inexperience as a chaperone, Violet had not the slightest idea how to break her plan to young Belwar, or how he would receive it. She realized, however, that it was necessary to have a house of her own wherein to hold her levees and to conduct this social

brokerage business which she, half unconsciously, had undertaken.

So, at the end of Violet's first year of wifehood, she found herself established on Fifth avenue in a mansion of her own, never realizing the large part that Belwar's interests played in the move, and how small thought her husband's dislike to ostentation and so-called "society" had weighed against the wish to serve her *protégé*.

Then she gave evening receptions and afternoon teas, and returned calls in her own coupé with the utmost exactitude.

Walter had secretly hoped that another and very different care would have occupied her attention, but the wish was unsatisfied.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON "THE BARBARY COAST."

THE financial condition of the Cyclops Railway System entered on a gradual decline soon after Walter Rawson assumed an active part in the directory. The clever idea of wrecking a great property in order that its destroyers might gain control, and enrich themselves from its revenue, was new. Walter Rawson invented it.

Therefore the same financial barometer that registered a steady rise in the Dawn and Sunset shares marked a decline in those of the Cyclops. The deficit in the treasury of the latter company finally became so large that the Board of Directors, to avoid their responsibilities, consented willingly to join Rawson, their youngest colleague, in a petition to the courts, asking for the appointment of a board of managers. This board was to consist of four trustees, with the president, treasurer, and secretary as ex-officio members, and was to be vested with full powers to execute all contracts, even to the purchase of a ton of railroad iron. The only accounting which the board had to render to the stockholders was by an annual report, addressed jointly to them and to the Auditor of State.

Of course, the plain English of this matter was the creation of a committee of receivers for the Cyclops System, though all its members were taken from its own directory. But however well this purpose was understood by the few persons in the plot, and by the judges who connived with them, the secret was carefully glossed over by the frequent use of the words "board of managers," "managing directors," and "executive board."

Within four hours of the acceptance of the plan by the stockholders of the Cyclops System, Judge Carlington, of New York, made the desired order, and fixed the following day for the hearing of the argument. It is unnecessary to say that the hearing was a mere form—one of Walter Rawson's paid counsel appearing as the attorney for some unheard-of stockholder, to oppose the issuance of the decree. The order was made permanent, and the managers were appointed at a special meeting of the Cyclops directors that very night.

The new Board of Managers, as at first constituted, was not a remarkable body in any respect. With the exception of President Barnwell, who retained his post at the head of the new board, and Walter Rawson, the names of the managers were quite unfamiliar to the ears of the stockholders.

Among the list was Ixbars, a shrewd young Bostonian, whose acquaintance Rawson had made since landing on the Barbary Coast. Ixbars, despite the oddity of his name, was commonplace in appearance.

He stood hardly more than five feet high, was quite corpulent, and somewhat effeminate in his manner and speech. A slight impediment in his voice, an almost imperceptible lisp, was the source of much mortification to him, and afforded his friends the motive for constant jokes at his expense. They would insist, for instance, in his presence, that he had been born in jail, and called "Sixbars" by the turnkey, in the absence of any legitimate name, but that the inability of the child to pronounce his own name resulted in the shortening of the first syllable. This was the foulest slander, because old Aaron Ixbars and his wife, Sarah, still lived in a quiet village among the Berkshire hills, and were respected by their neighbors for their many virtues.

Ixbars was gifted with that supreme self-assurance vulgarly denominated "cheek." He differed from the type we already know, Mr. Catesberry, in that there was no apparent impudence in his manner. He was, however, just the person Rawson had been seeking ever since he adventured upon that stormy coast against which the waves of Wall Street beat. Unlike Rawson, Ixbars never had possessed any social standing by birth; but, like his master, he had imbibed an utter contempt for the opinion of the world. He did not read novels, but had he been addicted to that diversion, he would have fully agreed with the author of "Madeleine":

"If you wish to cast consternation and despair into the human hive where you were born, or grew up,

achieve by uprightness (*tête haute*) success, honor, and fortune."

As a matter of simple justice to Ixbars, it should be said that he had reached considerable distinction in trade, gained by the strictest integrity. At the age of thirty-five he had attained to a partnership in one of the most prominent "dry goods" houses in Boston. Fifteen years of fidelity and toil had made him rich; he studied human nature as well as cottons and linens. These years, however, had convinced him of the truth of the idea embodied in the paragraph which immediately follows the one quoted above:

"But if you wish, on the contrary, to diffuse among your neighbors a sweet emotion of joy, go astray, so that your virtuous fellow-citizens may be able to shed tears over your ruin. When they weep over us, they are longing to smile!"*

He had discovered that those who console us under such circumstances congraulate themselves because we are no better than they.

Intent as Ixbars was on popularity, he had grown contemptuous of the good opinion of the few "highly respectable people," who, he knew, spoke of him with aversion in their families, but treated him with cringing courtesy on the floor of the Exchange and at his club. He became the popular idol of the New York multitude, and was the one man among a million for Rawson's purpose.

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* "Madeleine," par Jules Sandeau."

Aside from these two men, it must have been evident to the simplest understanding that the rest of the Board of Managers of the Cyclops were mere lay figures of good character belonging to the class that Ixbars delighted to "snub." Rawson's purpose in choosing his coadjutors afterward became clear, when it was seen how the anomalous complexion of the board befogged the public, including the most severe critics of the Cyclops scheme. The fact provoked curiosity, fostered indecision among Rawson's opponents, and gave him time to perfect the details of the campaign which he foresaw. First there was a wave of negative approbation, and for a time the new board commanded some respect.

The price of the stock recovered the place it had held on the list before the collapse, and the few violent opponents of "the more simplified method of managing the system" only exhausted themselves as well as the patience of the public in talk. The resignation of Mr. Barnwell at the end of three months, and the succession of Walter Rawson to the presidency, occasioned only passing comment. The duties of superintendent and treasurer were soon after united in the person of Mr. Ixbars.

A magnificent marble structure on Broadway was purchased, and the company's offices moved thereto. Such elegance of appointments had never been seen as were to be found there. Desks of solid ebony stood on Persian rugs. The messengers were attired in livery, resplendent with gold lace. Some of the best examples

of Fortuny, Gerome, and Meissonier hung on the walls. The small private office of the president contained a quarter of a million dollars' worth of pictures! All of this was the evolution of Professor Morton's theory regarding the mental work-room.

The new Board of Managers next increased the Cyclops' stock from $25,000,000 to $58,000,000, the inflated scrip being issued in large blocks to brokers, in the interest of the president and treasurer. These certificates were freely marketed for the benefit of the management, but still stood on the company's transfer books in the brokers' names. Under one excuse or another, these books were made inaccessible to the rightful owners of the shares. When certificates of stock were left to be transferred, they were placed in the hands of the managers of the road, and the holder was rarely furnished with a receipt. After days of anxiety, the purchasers were generally glad to get the original certificates back again, and to leave forever the atmosphere of those beautiful offices.

This course culminated in the seizure of 60,000 shares which Hawkshaw & Panama, the representatives of a large body of English stockholders, attempted to transfer. A storm of indignation was the result, but the case went into the courts, where the adroit lawyer of the management kept it for six months. This act, however, had the moral effect desired by the cabal, because it frightened all other stockholders from attempting further transfers. Confidence in the Board of Management was soon utterly gone—the very condition

of public sentiment, paradoxical though it seem, desired by Rawson and Ixbars.

Another important factor which Rawson had feared was an exposure of his schemes by the pure and incorruptible press of the metropolis. The *Cyclone*, which had now passed wholly under the control of John Burnaby—his old friend Jack—was launching columns of denunciation at the corrupt political horde that ruled New York. Rawson knew that Burnaby's friendship would never go far enough to sanction the scheme in which he was then engaged, and that the moment the editor learned the truth he would expose and denounce him. Rawson was particularly anxious, because he had found it necessary to affiliate in some degree with these politicians, to secure such legislation as he needed regarding terminal facilities for his railway. Personally, he had never shared to the extent of a shilling in any of their rascalities, but their interests were his. Avarice makes strange companions.

Walter Rawson received a cablegram from Paris about this time, informing him that Mootla would sail for New York from Havre on the following day and asking him to meet her.

Ten days later, when the *Periere* was announced, he drove to the wharf. There he was surprised to see Jack Burnaby, who greeted him frankly, though formally. He, too, had evidently come to see somebody on the ship. Rawson lost sight of him in the crowd that surged toward the gangway as the great steamer slowly swung round the pier's head into her dock.

Walter was closely on the watch for Mootla's face among the cabin passengers on the hurricane deck. When the ship was nearly in he saw a lady waving her handkerchief to him. She was Mootla, radiant in a closely fitting Paris-made traveling dress. She showed delight and pleasure in every feature of her face. But who was that by her side? Jack—Jack Burnaby! In a way so characteristic of him, Jack had swung himself on board with a rope left hanging near the gangway opening by the boarding-officers at quarantine.

Walter walked up the gang-plank as soon as it was out, and went on the upper deck. Mootla's greeting was very affectionate. She asked kindly about the wife he had chosen since their separation. Then she anxiously begged intelligence from her guardian, Mr. Mather, whose illness had brought her home and had necessitated her call upon two such good friends as Walter and Mr. Burnaby. Walter had not even heard of Mr. Mather's sickness.

"You know, Walter, yours is such a harem-scarem life that I feared you might be away when the cable message arrived, and I thought wisest to ask Mr. Burnaby to come down to the ship also."

Mr. Burnaby was bowing to another passenger, and affected not to have heard what was said.

"I will attend to your baggage, Mootla," volunteered Walter. "So you can get right into my carriage and drive to the house."

"Impossible, my dear fellow," answered Mootla.

"However much I shall regret not to see Violet, my first duty is to go straight to "The Willows," and that I'll do by the earliest train."

She turned and beckoned to her maid, who stood near by.

"Nanine, give the gentleman the keys to my twenty-eight trunks."

"I have them here, mademoiselle," answered the woman, producing a bunch of brass and steel keys that would have convicted any man on whose person they were found of being a professional burglar.

"No matter about the keys," said Walter, in a low voice. "Lend me the small bag the maid carries, and I will attend to the examination of the baggage."

He took the bag, discreetly placed a $100 note on the top of the gloves, keys, and trinkets it contained, and sallied off the ship to the wharf. When Mootla's trunks were all landed and placed in a row together, Walter selected a bright young inspector. He handed him the black bag, saying:

"You will find the keys on top in the bag. These are the trunks," pointing them out.

They were "examined" in ten minutes, loaded into a truck, and on their way to New Haven and Boston a quarter of an hour later. Mootla went by the first train.

CHAPTER XX.

TAKING A GREAT LOSS.

WHO can explain all the motives to human action? Perhaps a writer of fiction; but for him, even, it is a difficult task.

Violet Rawson thought herself exceedingly happy. She was excessively petted by society. She was surrounded by a bevy of young women, mostly wives, who flattered her with an unusual amount of attention; she was not insensible to this homage, but accepted it as due to her husband's wealth and her own beauty. Walter did not fail to observe the compliments and the adulation showered upon Violet, and he was in a mixed condition of pleasure and anxiety about what he saw. For several weeks he groped about in the dark for an explanation, but finally he got a clew.

Mrs. Walter Rawson had failed utterly as a chaperone. She had discovered marriageable girls enough; but when the brilliant scheme on which she had set her heart was unfolded to Oliver Belwar he respectfully declined to wed. Then he redoubled his attentions to her.

As she had begun by sneering at him, she ended by confessing to herself complete admiration. The secret of her acquaintance with Belwar no longer gave her

mind the slightest uneasiness. Other married women of "her set" accepted attentions quite as marked from young men of good families without exciting comment. Prior to this time, she had congratulated herself that nothing had occurred to compromise her; but now she felt superior to the opinion of the world. What society chose to think was a matter of indifference, so long as she believed in herself. As a married woman in society she possessed several friends among her own sex who never by any possibility could have been accessible to her as a young girl. It was not very long under their tutelage until she thought a suspicious reputation rather desirable than otherwise—always provided, of course, that it was false.

Justice must be done to Belwar. He had contemplated no grave crime in thrusting himself into Violet's society. Though he hadn't any morals to speak of, he did not at the time belong to that species of man who goes about in search of conquests at the price of dishonor. The less mystery there is about his purpose the better, as it will leave us all the more time in which to observe the disastrous effects of his wooing upon this vain woman, who, entrenched in a love whose possession she had enjoyed from childhood, utterly failed in proper appreciation of its priceless value. The gossip of her friends had taught her to disbelieve in the virtue of man. From the very instant that Belwar declined her proffered aid in effecting a desirable marriage and begged to be considered only as her slave, Violet flattered herself that this young man was passionately

enamored with her, and was bent on her fall. It became a matter of secret pride to her, chiefly because she was so confident of her own strength. Then, too, it was gratifying to know that he had virtually refused any one of half a dozen fortunes, which he might have had as a wife's dowry, to throw himself at her feet without the slightest hope of any reward.

His was a bold, audacious preference for her, but that caused no aversion. She had long since observed that he always mentioned her husband with repect—indeed the first occasion in which he had spoken otherwise would have opened Violet's eyes to her danger. Did not Belwar often ask, "What does Mr. Rawson think" of this enterprise or of that stock? At first she rarely knew what Walter thought about any feature of his business; but as Belwar's inquiries continued, she interested herself more and more in speculation that she might converse with Walter on the subject. She read every day the money article in the *Herald*, and invented the cunningest little devices to obtain the information which appeared so desirable to know. Sometimes the form was like this:

"One of the abominable papers says that you are a 'bear' on the New Orleans Air Line. Now, what is a 'bear'?" she would ask, innocently enough.

"The bear—is a philosopher; he has discovered that 'the other fellow' will get tired holding on," Walter would answer, perhaps, good-humoredly.

"But, be serious. Don't you see your poor ignorant little wife is trying to learn something."

"Well, a 'bear' is a man who believes in the depreciation of values at times as firmly as others do in their advance," Walter would explain.

"Then you believe in the depreciation. What does that mean—a decline in the market price of the New Orleans shares?"

"Exactly."

"You want it to go down, and that's why you're a 'bear'?"

"How quickly you learn."

"Well, my love, don't tell me any more this time—my head is all befogged. It's worse than g'ometry."

How interesting it would be to know the methods employed by Delilah to wheedle from Samson the secret of his strength! If there had only been a Boswell in that family, the world, or at least the men in it, would be much wiser than they are. It seems incredible that it could have been imparted to her strictly as a confidence. Samson knew the treachery of the Philistines too well, and, even though unsuspicious of her duplicity, he was guarded in his replies to any direct questions on the subject.

How similar the case of this modern and unconscious disciple of Delilah. Had Violet felt exactly right in her heart about Belwar's attentions she would have said to her husband:

"Our friend, Mr. Belwar, suggested to ask you whether it were better to buy or sell the New Orleans Air Line. Tell me what you advise so I can inform him when he calls."

Had she acted thus she had been a far brighter, shrewder woman than she was, because to do justice to her heart at the expense of her judgment, she did not fathom the designs of Belwar. Great is the trouble she would have averted had she only been truthful. A plain statement of the facts and a clear understanding of the situation would have enabled Walter to recognize the man's purpose, and he could have given Belwar a "pointer" that would have converted his ancestral mansion into an auction-room; the intimacy would have ended, and she would have been free again. But Violet was a woman; when that is written all is said.

Belwar was impelled to be doubly discreet—first, in order to obtain the information he desired; and, second, to avoid awakening Violet's suspicions. To have wounded her pride by the slightest exposure of the fact that his ardent court was not wholly due to love of her, would have been fatal to his project. Even the suspicion that she was being used by an adventurous lover would have evoked open repulse. Violet was, however, unsuspicious, and the fact that she was generally able to obtain the desired information without open confession, gave to the service a secret and attractive zest.

Oliver Belwar was only a seeker after "points." His methods were such that he attained very satisfactory results. He secured a half dozen morsels of information in this way during the first six months' struggle over the Consolidated Cyclops that netted him a small fortune in the stock market.

Just prior to the great break in the Cyclops shares, on the Hawkshaw and Panama decision, Violet approached her husband on the theme of stock speculation one night. She wanted to know what was to be "done" in Cyclops, but she was less clever than usual. Without suspecting the directness of the question, Walter asked:

"Why, pet? Do you inquire for some of your lady friends? Have you any stock speculators among them?"

Walter might have seen her face get burning hot, as she stammered:

"Yes; I more than half suspect it."

"Who asked you, Violet?"

"Miss—no, Mrs. Gunwale——"

Her face now glowed like a coal. It was her first deliberate falsehood to Walter, and before a moment had passed, she wished she had died before uttering it. She then realized that another chance to mention Belwar had escaped her—the last opportunity that ever presented itself!

Walter knew Mrs. Gunwale very slightly; but he understood her husband perfectly—a man whom he believed to be capable of anything disreputable in the way of business. Walter knew him as an ally of Dobell's, upon whose shoulders more than one joint responsibility had been loaded, because there were in it certain features that would not have stood the calcium-light of an experience meeting or an investigation by an Exchange committee. Walter decided that Mrs.

Gunwale's intimacy with his wife (she was old enough to have been Violet's mother) was for the purpose of utilizing information obtained from him through her for speculative purposes.

In the moment that elapsed before he resumed the conversation, Walter imagined the situation to be much more complicated than it really was. In his mind's eye, he saw Violet surrounded by harpies who were employing every species of cajolement, subtle insinuation and open entreaty to obtain early information as to his purposes.

Walter decided to teach the old speculator, Gunwale, a lesson.

"Well, little one," resumed Walter slowly, drawing his wife confidentially toward him, "I should like to do Mrs. Gunwale a favor, for your sake."

"You are very kind, Walter."

"I fancy the Gunwales haven't any too much money now ?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"I expect she wants a new team ; or, perhaps, a wedding outfit for that eldest girl of hers ?"

"I hadn't thought of that," said Violet, rapidly regaining confidence, only to plunge further into falsehood. "The sly old minx ; she said she'd call in the morning."

"Very well, Now, Violet, tell her that I'm advising all my friends to buy Cyclops ; that it's certain to make a sudden and splendid advance this week."

"I will, indeed. Good night. What a kind-hearted fellow you are." And she went to bed, and pretended to sleep.

Rawson, on the contrary, lay wide awake half the night. His eyes had been opened to possibilities that never had occurred to him before. The interest that Violet had appeared to take in his business of late, so pleasing and flattering at the time, now suggested a doubt whether this was the first instance in which his wife's friends had quizzed her to their mercenary advantage. Never, for an instant did he doubt Violet's fidelity to him. If his worst suspicions were true, they afforded new proofs of her innocence and purity. Her mind ought not to be made cognizant of this phase of the world's duplicity, he reasoned. No; but now that he was on his guard, he had nothing to fear from its results in the future. Indeed, might he not utilize the very snares that were laid for her, by supplying "points" that he knew would prove disastrous?

Strange how easily the human heart can justify what it does, though it may condemn with celerity the same act in others.

"When the enemy approaches under ground," argued Walter with himself, "the defence—countermines."

That's what he would do. He would encourage Violet to disseminate among all who sought it just such information as he chose to give her. As long as she knew not that she was serving the purpose of a stock-jobbing news-monger, her innocent mind would remain

uncontaminated—a novel way, so like the man, of paying old debts. So imbued was Walter with this idea when he awoke in the morning, that he said to his wife, as they were dressing for breakfast:

"If, for any reason, Mrs. Gunwale does not call here you had better stop at the house this afternoon on your way to the Park. It will be too late if the hint is not acted on to-morrow.

"No doubt she will call," said Violet, awkwardly.

"Suppose I suggest the matter to Gunwale himself? I see him every day."

"Oh! no. No, Walter, don't do that. It might violate what she intended as a confidence."

"But no doubt she'll ask her husband to buy the stock," he suggested.

"Likely as not; but she'll not reveal the source of her information. She's like any other woman."

"I don't mind his knowing that the suggestion comes from me."

"Well, let her tell him," exclaimed Violet. "I'll see Mrs. Gunwale surely to-day."

Poor Violet! she was literally at her wit's end. Why had she named Mrs. Gunwale? Why had she named anybody? Why, above all, had she falsified? She magnified the gravity of the situation even more than Walter had from his point of view. If Mrs. Gunwale (perfectly innocent as she was) ever learned that Violet accused her of playing the spy for a mercenary benefit, it was easy to foresee there would be a social explosion that might involve all sorts of consequences."

As a result of the tide of circumstances, Violet not only confided the precious secret regarding the coming sharp advance in Cyclops to Oliver Belwar, but also forced it upon the unsuspicious, though not unwilling, Mrs. Gunwale.

Violet called at her house. She chatted about the discomforts of hotel life and the satisfaction she had enjoyed since the change to a house of her own. There were a thousand things the visitor could have said that would have been news to the elder woman, because their acquaintance was only of the most formal kind. Violet, however, proved her latent woman's tact when she quietly remarked:

"But what is better than all else is Walter's good health and exuberance of spirits."

"I am glad, for your sake, my dear Mrs. Rawson," answered the elder woman, in her naturally effusive way, reflecting as she spoke on the splendor of the lace scarf that was thrown back from Violet's neck while in the house.

"All his troubles are at an end. Everything is settled in the Cyclops litigation, and Walter tells me confidentially that the advance in the price of that stock next week will be so sharp that it will make everybody interested in the company rich. He even said that one of his friends had mortgaged his house to buy still more before it gets scarce."

"Indeed! that's worth knowing," exclaimed Mrs. Gunwale, exhibiting unmistakable interest.

Violet soon after took her leave, but there was plenty

of time between that hour and ten o'clock next morning for old Gunwale to be apprised of the valuable secret.

Having sold Cyclops to an enormous amount, Rawson brought the litigation to a sudden termination by allowing a decision against the company. His board announced, with great show of regret, the surrender, under the order of the court, of the 60,000 shares of stock which "rightfully belonged to the company, because obtained by the foreign holders through the flagrant and corrupt neglect of the previous directory." They deprecated the severe blow to the finances of the corporation, entailed by this most unjust decision—all of which caused a sudden drop of twenty-five points in the stock. Rawson and Ixbars quietly gathered in enough shares to balance those which they had surrendered, seeing that they could not retain them a moment if the case were carried into open court.

This apparent surrender had one ill effect. Within a week President Rawson began to suspect the fidelity of some of his allies, and he saw that he must openly challenge his opponents. It was easy enough to keep control of the company so long as he could vote on the watered stock standing on the books in the names of friendly brokers, but danger lay in the steadfastness of these coadjutors. They must be convinced at once by some means that he was the man to tie to.

All this occurred on a Friday, that dark and portentous seventh of every week. The decision of the court was rendered at the very hour Walter had di-

rected. The shot struck two enemies. One was known to Rawson, the other unknown. The sudden drop of twenty-five dollars per share in Cyclops, described in a previous chapter, ruined Oliver Belwar. Gunwale was hurt to the extent of $100,000; three brokers were forced to suspend, and a general panic was threatened.

It was quoted to Rawson's credit (for a few days only) that he came personally to the rescue of the stock, and by purchases of 40,000 shares at about the lowest figures, prevented further decline.

He little dreamed what vials of wrath he had opened for the future.

By noon the next day poor Violet's face was the picture of shame and despair. Mrs. Gunwale rushed to her house and visited on her the depths of her indignation. She upbraided Violet with shameless ingratitude for social favors which she invented as fast as they could be named. She called her a hired "stool-pigeon," a "panderer to a stock-gambler," and many other nameless epithets that women of veneered refinement use in the presence of their own sex with surprising ease and fluency. Worst of all, she vowed she'd see Walter Rawson and tell him to his face what "a worthless hound" he had shown himself by sending his wife, unasked, to tell her such ruinous falsehoods.

Violet foresaw in that threatened meeting between her husband and this infuriated woman complete exposure. Then burst upon her in all its terrible actu-

ality a realization of how she had, step by step, committed herself to a policy of fraud, and had dragged this fellow-sinner's happiness down amid the ruins of her own. And, worst of all, while she might have survived the injury done to another woman, her own situation appalled her.

Walter was too much engrossed in his great enterprises to give more than a passing thought of satisfaction to Gunwale's misfortune (which somehow had leaked out in the street) or to observe Violet's distress. It is possible that he detected the paleness of her face; but heavens! anxiety had caused his own cheeks to wear the shadow of death.

Never had he made a more clever stroke nor a quicker "turn." The hour seemed just the one for an even bolder move. All his "shorts" had been covered and the deliveries quietly made. Why not cause his failure to be announced and break the market even lower, to buy? It was a bright idea. For fear that Violet might see the rumors in the newspapers, he would prepare her mind and reassure her.

As he was about to go to his office Tuesday morning, Walter kissed his trembling wife even more tenderly than usual. She followed him to the front door, a marked favor on her part. 'Twas the very moment to tell her what he wanted to say in such a form that it would have the desired effect if repeated. Therefore he exclaimed:

"Good-bye, little wife. I shall probably be a beggar before night."

"A what!" she gasped.

"A pauper, my dear. This great smash in Cyclops has ruined me."

She stood before him, speechless. He was frightened at her appearance, and sought to reassure her, in part, at least, by saying:

"What matters it, Violet. I still have you."

With languid tenderness she lingered at the foot of the stairs, and yielded her lips when he embraced her once again.

Walter Rawson left the house, and entered his coupé in perfect happiness, thinking in his heart, now so blinded by selfishness and avarice:

"Since life is joy—is love—why can't we live forever?"

. . . . . .

He returned that evening to find Violet gone, with all her wardrobe and valuables.

What had happened? This:

A half hour after Walter's departure, Oliver Belwar had driven furiously up to the door. He had asked for Mrs. Rawson, had informed her that Mrs. Gunwale knew all; and was, at that very moment on her way to Walter's office, to expose to him the faithless character of his wife. He ended by falling at her feet, swearing eternal fidelity, and beseeching her to fly with him to Europe, on the steamer that sailed at daylight. Confirming, as did this story, all her worst fears, Violet accepted the inevitable fate of a silly woman driven to desperation—and fell.

She acted impulsively and foolishly. She summoned her maid, announced that her father was dying at a hotel in Boston, and that she had been called there at once. Throwing into two trunks her jewels, and such articles of wearing apparel as were accessible, she had them carried to the street, and placed upon the coach. Then she was driven away, no one knew whither.

Thus ended Walter's dream of happiness.

His married life was only an episode in his career.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BLIND POOL.

TERRIBLE as was the fact, difficult as it was to realize, Violet was gone. She had left no word or trace behind further than a brief note, saying :

"Farewell, Walter. Don't seek me—you will be too late to save me. I 'm not going to take my life—at least not now. Why I am throwing away my happiness I do not know any more than you."

Walter Rawson indulged in no hysterical manifestations of grief. He was almost physically prostrated by the shock, but he conquered his mental emotion in a few hours. When that conflict had terminated in his favor he recognized the import of Violet's conduct. Fate had challenged him at last. Else why should his wife have deserted him ? Not a reason existed.

Now the conflict !

As soon as night fell he put on his hat and started out on one of the long and fatiguing walks he had been accustomed to take during his early struggles with Fate—when she appeared in the form of Fortune.

He walked far and rapidly. Without the slightest definite idea as to whither he was bound, Walter was recalled to himself by the chime of Trinity Church. Ah ! how far the sound of those bells is heard ! Sure

enough, he had traversed Broadway, and from sheer force of habit had turned down Wall Street into Broad. Then he looked around him. Who were these figures moving about from door to door in the moonlight? Had the Dutch burgomasters returned to the New Amsterdam of to-day—for surely it was they who sat on the stoops of the tall dark buildings and smoked their pipes so contentedly.

He had never seen Broad street by night. Where were all the callous, active men like himself? Another race was in possession—a population the very existence of which he had never suspected. The families of the janitors, descended to the door-steps, or, in some instances, to the front windows of the lower offices, were receiving and paying calls, and exchanging gossip with their neighbors. Young children were gathered in groups listening to stories from older ones. Further on a bevy of girls sauntered along, pouring their day's batch of secrets into each other's ears. And there were lovers, too—courtship, marriage, perdition. Ah! but Death came there, likewise. Now that he remembered it, Rawson had passed a priest on the stairs one afternoon. But funerals could only occur on Sunday, or after business hours. The priest! Yes, he had certainly seen him; but, filled as was his brain with business, he had been heartless enough to suppose that the good man was slipping in to "take a flyer" in stocks. Could it be that these same halls and stairways, known to him only when filled with the bustling crowd, echoed at night to the tread of coffin-bearers

and the sobs of the bereaved? No street in America so full of life in daylight; none so lone and dismal after dark.

Here he was before the door of his own office. A voice saluted him respectfully:

"Why, Mr. Rawson, can this be you?"

"Yes, William," answered Walter, recognizing the face of his own janitor.

"Will you walk up-stairs, sir? It is quite an occasion with us."

"What, pray?"

"A wedding, sir. My daughter is about to be married. We 're only waiting for the parson."

"I thank you, William; but I do not feel well. Please excuse me," said the broker, shuddering.

"It would be a great honor to us, and would make our Rose very happy. And George, too, her husband that is to be; don't you remember George?"

"George Cole?"

"The very same."

"I wish him every happiness; but I can't stop. I want to send a present to the bride." And Rawson drew a roll of bills from his pocket which he thrust into the old janitor's reluctant fingers. Then he hastened away homeward.

"Rose—another flower," he muttered, recalling Violet's name, as he stumbled aimlessly along. "Ah! but mine was a weed."

He stopped long enough at the general post-office to scribble the following note on a leaf of his memoran-

dum-book, which he inclosed in an envelope and mailed to Cotton Mather.

"Violet has left me. I know not where she's gone. Fate has challenged me. With your aid I can go on—I can face it. If the offer made on the day of my father's burial holds good, I accept it, and thank you.

"Sincerely,

"WALTER."

At this hour of conflicting pride and dishonor, in which he chewed his heart as a cud, one name alone rose in his mind; he saw only one face that supplanted even in the slightest degree hers that was lost. She alone was left to him—his sister, Mootla. Recognition came to him in all its fullness of the grief which she had endured—aye, had mastered. The weird symposiums they had held at "The Willows" and on the rocks at Nantasket! Was she not a student of Fate, a believer in Destiny, a reader of the stars? To her, then, his heart turned as to an all-potent amulet. For her he longed as the only companion for a misery like his. Whence this fascination of Mootla? Was she really beautiful? Who knows? The secret of beauty is as hidden as the mystery of sin.

A writer, making a study for his heroine, watches her as affected by happiness or despair; he penetrates to her heart and studies her thoughts. She is never from his sight, and, if he would be truthful and accurate, he must paint her as she is. To alter the evidence or suppress traits that are prejudicial to her popularity is an act of bad faith.

The general opinion regarding Mootla was that she was a highly intellectual woman, of attractive manners —a woman who discountenanced social intimacy because it entailed a waste of time. Bereft of maternal care, she was womanly just to the amount that her nurse and governess had been able to dominate her mind. And that was very little. She had become her own mistress at so early an age that she had hardly felt the tender anxieties and girlish pride of maidenhood. She treated all humanity alike. Even all creation. The only tender spot in her nature was for mankind in distress. Irresolute and capricious as her nature made her appear to others, she certainly possessed the rare ability to discount and enter to future account every acquaintance of an hour's duration. Associated with each friendship was some possible subsequent situation in which he or she would serve. Therefore, she never forsook an acquaintance, once formed, and never regarded as lost one that abandoned her. Walter's carelessness in making enemies she regarded as the vulnerable point in his character—and she was right.

Though Mootla had outgrown the nervous distemper of her youth, she was at times physically weak to the verge of complete collapse. And yet, in more respects than one, she was an example of purpose as clearly defined, as logically pursued, and as firmly adhered to as though she had all the resources of the world's power at her command. When she decided upon anything, she already foresaw her design executed and its

effect. This trait she possessed in even greater degree than Walter. Indeed, it was their only characteristic in common, this faculty of arriving at a conclusion, not by an exercise of reasoning, but by the rash, rare gift of presumptuous intuition. Seeing the completed work or act, the intermediary details and the generative cause arranged themselves in her imagination for inspection—acceptance or rejection. Thus she, unwittingly and after a fashion of her own not yet laid down in books, reasoned from future effect back to the about-to-be cause.

The strange, unaccountable conduct of Violet brings the figure of Mootla into the foreground again, for the receipt of Walter's letter at "The Willows" marked an epoch in the life of the indwellers there.

After some hesitation, Cotton Mather summoned Mootla to his room, and, with moistened eyes, took Walter's letter from his pocket and handed it to her. She read it carefully, and apparently without shock. After a moment's silence, she said:

"There can be no doubt as to my duty. This man is my brother. I shall go to him."

Thus it happened that Walter returned to his home late one afternoon about this time to find, amid the gloomy half-light of his library, Mootla, seated on a low hassock by the side of the grate, with her hands firmly clenched over her knees. She was looking intently into the glowing embers, studying a picture she saw there.

When Walter's footfall was heard, she started to her

feet, extended both hands, and the well-remembered voice said cheerily :

"I have come."

"You are welcome, Mootla."

They stood silently looking into each other's eyes for an instant.

"If I dared——," she half whispered. Irresolution, for once, overcame her. But she was soon mistress of herself, and, in an impulsive fashion that was entirely characteristic of her, she pulled Walter's face down to hers and kissed him.

It was the act of an angel. Never was greeting more tender or womanly.

"My brother," she murmured.

"You know who you are ?" he exclaimed.

"I do ; else why should I be here ?"

"True."

"Ah ! Walter, what have yon done ?" said Mootla, in a changed tone, giving a startling turn to the conversation.

"I ?"

"You have driven poor Violet out into the wide world—sinning and scorned."

"Why, girl. You don't know the facts," replied Walter, almost brusquely.

"Yes ; I have read the history of Violet's married life here"—looking about her—"in every piece of furniture, in every hanging curtain, in every article she has touched. Even in the coals have I seen her struggles against a misery from which one word in

time, spoken by you, would have saved her. No, no; your life has been all wrong."

"Are you deranged, Mootla?" asked Walter, almost frightened by the imprecations thus calmly heaped upon his head.

"I am only sad, heart-broken, that a love like hers and yours should have ruined itself."

"You never knew Violet."

"True; but I have learned here, to-day, that the air she has breathed was far too rarified for the sustenance of a pure and luxurious love."

"You are cruel, Mootla."

"But you deserve all I say to you."

"Why add to my misery?"

"Because when you fathom its full depth you will be more valiant to master it."

"But how can I save her now, even granting what you say?" he said slowly, overcoming a choking sensation in his throat.

"Too late. She is lost."

"But she may have repented ere this."

"To pardon her is to be despised of mankind."

"The reproaches of society have no terrors for me."

"Every act of yours will be further humiliation to Violet, and she suffers enough now, I 'll be bound."

"She must never want, Mootla. Violet has been too precious to me. I will not abandon her."

Mootla looked at him. Her eyes beamed with tenderness, but her voice was harsh.

"You don't owe the world anything—at least, not enough for that sacrifice," she said.

"I don't understand."

"You don't? Haven't you comprehended that your social position is gone?"

"Yes."

"Then you must trample on the neck of society, or it will mock you, and pretend a sympathy that is secret exultation. No, you have made too many enemies to be magnanimous."

A moment before, looking at life selfishly, it had seemed to Walter that society owed him everything—even sympathy and forgetfulness. Now he saw how hollow and baseless was his claim. He buried his face in his hands and muttered:

"The taint of avarice has poisoned my happiness."

Mootla withdrew to another part of the room, and left him alone with his thoughts. Walter rapidly evolved in his mind a plan by which Violet should be secured against privation in the bitter days of her future. He hoped to save her from the final consequences of her rash and hasty act, to shield her from those ever-present spectres hovering over every forsaken and homeless woman—the public hospital and the dissecting table. He wanted her to stop where she was, not to sink into the slums. He fully understood that he alone stood between her and utter earthly degradation. That the Vreeland family would renounce her he knew already; that Belwar would soon abandon her to the downward path was not less certain. Poor

Violet, what was to become of her? These reveries were checked by the street bell.

"I forgot to say that our uncle came with me," explained Mootla. "He sent me up in a cab, as he had business to finish down town. Perhaps this is he."

Walter stepped into the hall as the butler sprung the oak.

Cotton Mather's face was wreathed in smiles. He was two hundred weight of good nature. Shaking Walter's hand warmly, he said:

"I'm here, my boy; at your service to the end."

"I welcome you to my heart."

The grand old man threw off his coat and hung up his hat with all the earnestness of a person who had never done anything else. He then asked for a glass of brandy and water, walked into the dining-room, waited until the decanter was placed before him, helped himself sparingly, and then carefully seated himself in an easy chair.

A general conversation about "The Willows," the condition of Boston trade, and the health of Mootla's pets filled the time until dinner was announced.

The table was circular. Violet's place was abolished already.

After the coffee was served, the two men adjourned to the smoking-room, up-stairs, to consider the situation.

Curiously enough, the first act after the door was closed was to shake hands again. Then Cotton Mather,

to make the situation easier for his companion, led off the conference thus:

"We can be of infinite use, one to the other."

"I fully recognize the fact," answered Walter, heartily. "Let me tell you what I have set out to do," and the young man then ran briefly over the plans by which he hoped in twenty years to accumulate half a billion of money, the source from which it was to be drawn, who were to be impoverished and who benefited. He sketched out the rise of the Political Estate, and calmly described its methods of money-getting.

It was a strange and intensely fascinating revelation to Cotton Mather, supplementing, as it did, many of his own conclusions, reached from a widely different starting point.

He was greatly agitated as he sprang to his feet and exclaimed:

"Laurel Hill! I have arranged to settle an account of my own with the professional politicians. You take the nabobs, the retired army contractors, the railroad sharks, but promise me one thing——"

"Certainly; anything."

"Leave the professional politician to me. He's my mutton. Just listen to what I have already arranged to do."

And the enthusiastic old man unfolded the vision from Egypt, introducing "the cat of Pharoah," with much unconscious dramatic effect.

"The scheme's a good one, so far as the gratifica-

tion of your just hatred goes; but I see one serious objection."

"What is it?" demanded Cotton Mather, almost abruptly standing still, with a hand raised for another gesture, in his wild harangue.

"It won't pay. It's a losing game," said Walter, with provoking calmness.

"Fudge! What do I care?"

"But can't we hatch a scheme that will both destroy the game and secure the hide?"

"I hadn't thought of that."

"I think we can."

"'There's no objection to that amendment, provided I get what I want,' to borrow their own language," rejoined Cotton Mather, chuckling over his memories of Washington cloak-room confidences. Rawson continued:

"All my plans have been laid with the definite purpose of 'scalping' somebody. It is the easiest and squarest method of dealing between man and man. All trade is a swindle. Commerce consists in selling things for more than you pay for them, and to people who don't specially need them. Whether the purchaser wants the goods or not, he or the next buyer takes the loss. The man who sells potatoes to my cook knows that I have to take the loss of their consumption. Trade is a swindle; I repeat it. The secret of success in it is to find a customer, or many of them."

"Why, I never looked at it just that way," muttered the merchant.

"Only because you haven't given the subject adequate consideration. You are too sensitive about other people's feelings. Does the world care anything for your misfortunes? Not a particle. Let us 'go for' them all, bald-headed."

"But to be effective we must join interests."

"Wrong again. To crush all obstacles, we must be our own rivals."

"I don't understand," stammered the old man, seeing that he had roused the younger, and that Walter had plunged into water in which he could hardly follow him.

"We must be open enemies to the world," continued Walter, speaking rapidly. "We'll unite our capital, our hatreds, and our hearts; but we must not even bow to each other in public; we must keep apart."

"That's a great sacrifice, my dear boy, for I love you fondly."

"Say the word, then, and I surrender all the scheme. If we go into any blind pool it must be on those terms."

Walter walked about the room. In his present mood he was a splendid specimen of directing genius. His mind already grasped every detail of a financial combination that could shake the commercial world. He molded the more than ordinary mind of his companion as though it had been wax. Already the older man saw that he had roused a spirit he could not control. Walter assumed leadership as naturally as a bird soars skyward. He was imperious only in language; in

manner he was courteous and respectful. The old merchant was in a brown study. He had found his nephew only to lose him. He had himself suggested the very means of separating them. What should he do? Walter settled the quandary for him.

"You have already realized on most of your property?"

"Yes; I have five millions in twenty banks ready for the work. I have as much more in lands and bonds."

"A ten million pool, then. So be it. I'll come in. Five a-piece. Is it a go?"

"It is."

"Then we have one common object in life—the Rawson family against the world."

The two men fell into each other's arms, and stood for fully a minute patting each other on the back.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN A TIGHT PLACE.

As if Walter Rawson had not seen trouble enough already, the financial and political skies suddenly became black as ink. Every member of the Cyclops cabal, except its leader, was in dismay.

"The Barnwell Board" of Directors, as this committee was called, were no sooner seated than the English stockholders of the Dawn and Sunset united to defeat the order of sale to Rawson. They were clamorous for the restoration of the road to its original owners. While openly opposing this agitation, Walter Rawson secretly encouraged it. His agents circulated the most scandalous rumors against the board of his own creation. He finally induced Sir Matthew Halifax to begin legal proceedings in the British interests.

The greatest firm of railroad lawyers in the world were retained by Sir Matthew. Dunbar & Jones grasped the situation and crushed the upstart management. Within six weeks, owing to a liberal use of the Atlantic cable, the lease by the Cyclops Company of the Dawn and Sunset line was pronounced illegal and void. Rawson was out of the leased line's stock—"short" of it many thousand shares—though a few hundred stood on the books in his name. Here was

another see-saw. Cyclops "relieved of an odious burden," began to climb toward higher prices. The Dawn and Sunset was adjudged bankrupt, and on application of Sir Matthew Halifax, the court appointed Judge Goshock sole receiver.

This man, whose name was afterward indissoluby linked with the history of this country as the fourth member of a political quadrilateral which has given its name to all succeeding conspiracies of the kind, was at that hour comparatively unknown. From the first letters of these men's names was coined a new word, now a part of all shady commercial dealings—Rawson, Ixbars, Nogood, Goshock—R-I-N-G.

Politically, this cabal goes down in history as "The Nogood Ring" when the man whose name it takes was the least brilliant or shrewd of the four.

"Judge" Goshock never had studied any law. He had obtained a diploma through political influence, and was a Bachelor of Laws, according to the parchment. A nominating convention and the fidelity of the inspectors of election had made him a police justice. It is due to the accuracy of history to say that he filled the office satisfactorily. His findings were never overruled, because he remembered so well the only code of procedure he had ever studied and "when in doubt" regarding the guilt or innocence of a prisoner," he "took the trick," as it were, by discharging the man.

"Judge" Goshock employed the "rebates" of the office to speculate in stocks under the advice of Walter Rawson. The latter had recognized the man's value,

under many possible and probable circumstances, and Goshock had been encouraged with a glimpse of the border lands of wealth.

Properly advised as he was, it will be readily understood that "Judge" Goshock lost very little time in effecting a re-lease of the Dawn and Sunset Railway and all its properties to the great Cyclops Company. The terms were much more favorable than those formerly obtained, and appeared on their face very satisfactory to the leased company.

This, Walter Rawson hoped, would crush the movement against him in England, but he was mistaken. The British stockholders of the Dawn and Sunset were in earnest. They met at Cannon Street Station, London, organized, subscribed fifty thousand pounds for expenses, and appointed a committee for the campaign. So it was that this agitation, started by Walter Rawson as a speculative job, crystalized into the most dangerous realism he ever had to face.

Casting about for strong parties who would join interests with them, the British committee found that the stockholders of the Alaska and Patagonia Railway were smarting under a grievance similar to theirs. This latter road—though it carried the names of the farthermost confines of the Western hemisphere—was less than two hundred miles long. It traversed a rich mineral region which had been expected to supply fabulous tonnage to the Cyclops system; but by clever management quite like that accorded to the trunk line, this valuable feeder had been brought under complete subjection by

Rawson and Ixbars. Its honest but inefficient directors had been gradually but persistently supplanted by creatures of the Cyclops ring. From a regular dividend-paying road the Alaska and Patagonia had become one of the most unsalable stocks on the Exchange—owing to the popular distrust of its management.

It was clearly the purpose of the Cyclops cabal to have the road declared insolvent by one of its hired judges, and placed in the hands of one of the ring's professional receivers. What made this evident was the sudden retirement of the Honorable John Sandown, of Albany, from the directory of the company and the prompt election of Nogood to fill the vacancy. This act evoked such a storm of condemnatinn from the public and the newspapers that the step was regretted by Rawson and Ixbars. Nogood could not be expected to withdraw; he was made of tough material and liked a fight.

Here providence (with a small letter) came to the aid of Walter Rawson, who was in a serious state of perplexity.

By an unexpected coincidence, on the identical night on which the moon looked reddest, Nogood was formally arrested on a charge of robbing the people of New York. The arrest was trifling enough in itself—for the accused furnished ten times the amount of bail asked—but it was memorable, for it offered occasion for Nogood to give the world his famous epigram:

"What are ye goin' to do 'bout it?"

The benefit of Nogood's arrest was that it diverted

public attention for the moment from the Cyclops conspirators.

Nogood said to his coadjutors, political and social:

"Don't worry. We elected the Governor of this state only a few weeks ago. There's no reason why any of us should go to jail. I—guess not."

A merciful Providence (this time with a capital letter) kept from their knowledge that the members of the Assembly into whose pockets so many thousands of the city's dollars had been diverted, and the governor, whom this cabal had counted in, were already in the pay of the enemy. Had this been known, however, men of the cabal would have snapped their fingers and said:

"We own the judiciary, and can buy all the juries in Christendom."

Walter Rawson feared a union of all his enemies. While they were divided, he could crush them in turn; but, united, the opposition would, indeed, be formidable. He was pre-eminently the man for the hour. By a sweep of his pen, he announced the resignation of Nogood and Goshock from the Cyclops directory, and that President Panama, of the Alaska and Patagonia corporation and another prominent official of that road would at once accept the vacant positions. To compel Panama's obedience, Rawson began suits against him, as the president of the Alaska and Patagonia road, for monies alleged to be due under the lease to the Cyclops system. President Panama squirmed and temporized, to gain time; but Rawson, having a shadow of a case

against this road, had the date of trial rapidly advanced by the judges in his pay and was confident of complete success.

Panama's hesitation was due to a knowledge of the growing strength of the British combination, headed by General Worden, a bold, dashing and unscrupulous member of the Political Estate, snugly ensconced in Europe, who had been hired to conduct the engagement against the Cyclops management. Worden had succeeded in organizing an attack that included every stockholder that was opposed to the Rawson *régime.* The Cyclops, and Dawn and Sunset rebels had all united and the assistance of the Alaska and Patagonia opponents of the cabal was greatly desired.

Panama, therefore, had no difficulty in making his own terms with Worden's personal representative on this side of the ocean; he was assured that the real owners of the Cyclops system would, in return for his fidelity, wipe off all scores against his company, and would fix a satisfactory freight rate. Within a few hours President Panama rallied about him a majority of his board, and by his personal influence, without acquainting them with the pledges he had received, induced their solemn pledges of fidelity.

There were now three distinct elements in the anti-Rawson combination, but all were thoroughly joined in interest. General Worden's appearance in New York was felt to be enough to unite them all under his leadership.

Rawson's final extinction seemed close at hand. The

entire strength of the Political Estate (saving the few members whom he had involved in his own net) were arrayed against him. How to beat them was the problem. Borrowing one of their own favorite expressions, so often uttered during the "storm and stress" period in which the Estate rose, he said to himself:

"I' ll 'copper' their game. I'll play to lose."

Resolute and courageous as he was, the loss of Violet haunted his mind constantly. He opened an account in her name at an up-town bank. He forgave and pitied her.

It was never satisfactorily explained why Violet Rawson took the terrible step of leaving her husband for a man she really did not love. The probability is that two influences suddenly and unexpectedly coming into conjunction induced the act. Hers, certainly, was not a deliberate flight; but, rather, a surrender to an impulse. It was an emotional crime, like that one in the carpenter's shop. By nature and training Violet was intensely vain and selfish. With the misleading avowal from her husband that he had lost his wealth, Violet beheld herself cast out of the social circle in which was all of life that appeared to her worth enjoying. To be dropped from the visiting lists on which her name stood, and, worse still, to take "the cut direct" from old acquaintances, on the street and in the Park, seemed to her the lowest degradation. She shrunk from such a future in terror, and, believing what Belwar told about Mrs. Gunwale's determination, she took the wild, irrevocable step.

Mootla's explanation was the only philosophical one.

"Violet acted wholly on impulse," said she to Cotton Mather. "I am sure of that. It was a case of panic in which her conscience was stampeded by the sudden terror of detection in falsehood and duplicity. It was the simultaneous fact—a coincidence of several crises, always dangerous."

Oliver Belwar did not make any secret of *his* motives in destroying Rawson's social happiness. He boasted, one night at the Full Moon Club, at a champagne supper, that he had revenged himself on every man who had wronged him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THOUSANDS FOR AN INCH OF TIME.

THE gathering storm was evident to all eyes. But the defense was thoroughly organized, and Rawson felt himself equal to all his foes.

Though credited with impulsiveness, Walter never acted without deliberation. One secret of his marvellous success was the careful study of prospective results from certain or possible causes. A curious trait of this remarkable man's character may be mentioned here. In his leisure moments his mind employed and interested itself by establishing a defense or an alibi, for use in every conceivable emergency. For example, as he explained one night to Cotton Mather :

"My mind asks the question, 'Suppose the Cyclops building caught fire some night when I was its only occupant. What would be my defence if indicted for arson?' Or, 'Suppose I were to be arrested for an assault committed last evening at nine o'clock in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, could I prove that I was at the Juniper Club?'"

This idiosyncrasy which Rawson fully recognized but did not struggle against, begot in him what passed for wonderful foresight. The mental interrogatories were merely varied to: "If I bring about a disagreement

with various co-operating roads, so that the Cyclops cannot do a through Western business, will not its stock be a good 'short' sale?" "Granted that I am regarded as a bad manager or a rascal, will not the Cyclops stock greatly advance in price when I leave it?" And out of this theorizing grew the novel but successful policy of life which his great wealth enabled him to follow—with success.

In the midst of this impending trouble, Walter Rawson was one day summoned to Crumpet by the dangerous illness of his mother. Wilder Joy, his private secretary, declared that his absence during such a crisis would be very indiscreet; but the call to his mother's bedside could not be disregarded. Walter decided to go at once.

He left the Cyclops building after dark and reached his old home by a night train. He found his mother unconscious. She had had a stroke of paralysis.

For two days he sat constantly by her side, and did everything in the power of a son to minister to the sick woman's wants.

Then it was he fully realized the ineffable delights of a life free from care, apart from the crowd—the peace, the purity of a region where fraud and malice enter not.

Such thoughts as these were passing through his mind as he sat in the dusk of evening by his mother's couch. She was sleeping calmly, and fear of immediate danger was past. A quick footstep was heard on the gravel walk leading to the stile that gave access to a

shorter road to the boat-landing and railroad station than that through the main gateway. Evidently the visitor was not a stranger. Rawson rose hastily and stepped noiselessly into the hall. There he confronted his secretary, who, out of breath with running, asked abruptly :

"Why do you not return ?"

"Return ?" asked Rawson curiously.

"Yes. I have telegraphed you every hour since nine o'clock, and in every conceivable way—by the cipher and by half a dozen other methods."

"What's the matter ?"

"The assault will be made on the Cyclops building at midnight. The differences you 've kept open have all been settled. The opposition is a unit."

"Who is your authority ?"

"Judge Latchall——"

——"Who acts for the British contingent ?"

"The same."

"Very well" (drawing his watch). "Eight o'clock. We shall receive them."

"No train till ten."

"We must go earlier," muttered Walter to himself, as he stepped back into the hall and seized his overcoat and hat. Then he sprang lightly up-stairs, kissed the ashen-hued face of his mother, and slipped out of the room.

A man is never wholly bad who loves his mother.

A small engine-house stood just below the railroad station, in which a passenger locomotive or two were

generally laid up for repairs. Toward this building Walter rapidly hastened, followed by his bewildered secretary.

At the turn-table, in front of the house, stood Bowcher, now a superannuated engineer. Walter knew him at sight. He clutched him by the arm. The startled man shook himself loose; but Rawson explained who he was in a few words, and declared that his fortune depended ou going to New York at once. He then asked: "Have you an engine there?" pointing toward the round-house.

"The Corneel Nepos."

"Is she fast?"

"She can do the distance in two hours," and the old engineer drew himself up to his full height.

"Get her out at once. I'll have orders from the president by the time steam 's up. Five hundred dollars for you if I 'm in New York before eleven!"

The old man was young again! He entered the round-house at a bound, engaged a fireman from among the oilers and wipers about the place. Fortunately, the Nepos had been out on the road during the day and the water in her boiler was still warm. With his own hands the old engineer tossed in the pitched kindlings, applied a match, and soon had a roaring fire. Then he descended from the cab, lamp in hand, and carefully looked over the entire engine, tightening a nut here or loosening another there. The moment the gauge showed steam enough, the Nepos was run out of the house,

Meanwhile Walter stepped into the telegraph office. Knowing that there was no time to communicate with the president of the road he issued an order to keep the track clear, and signed it with his own all-potent name. All station agents down the line had notice that a "special" train followed the Pacific express as far as Mallory's landing, where it would overtake and pass it.

An empty baggage car stood on a siding, and the engineer having quickly made fast to it, pulled out on the main track to New York. Wilder Joy, Rawson's private secretary, seated himself on a bench in the car, lighted by a lantern swinging from its roof.

The train moved off. At a word from Bowcher the fireman took a bit of copper wire out of the tool-box and fastened down the safety-valve. Then he began to cram the fire-box.

At the front door of the car stood Walter Rawson, watching every movement in the cab.

The Nepos must warm to her work. There was a jerk as the train rounded the first curve and passed the main street of the village leading down to the pier. Then, with his teeth set, the engineer threw the lever forward, opened all the draughts, closed the cylinder cocks, and pulled the throttle clear out. Away into the night the Nepos rushed, having a straight and level stretch of road for five miles ahead.

"Coal! Chock 'er!" was the engineer's constant command to his stoker.

The old Nepos slowly made steam,

Bowcher watched the clock carefully. The engine was not thoroughly alive yet; she jumped and pounded the rails too much.

Around a sharp curve, swaying frightfully, the Nepos rushed. Emerging into the open, a red light appeared in front on the left. It was impossible to stop. Let an engine-driver describe his feelings at such a moment. He had only time to shut down and reverse before the Nepos rushed past a small house close to the track, at whose lighted window was a red curtain—the terrible signal of danger. Bowcher didn't smile away his fright. He threw the lever clear forward and opened the throttle wide.

He sounded the whistle as they plunged into the mouth of a tunnel. The infernal glare against the dank walls from the roaring furnace's mouth, the crash of the wheels and swaying of the monster of steel and fire—like swinging on the hinges to the gate of hell!

Out into the starlight again, and a level stretch ahead. The track crossed a lagoon, at the end of which stood a village with many lights. Far away, these glowing spots spun slowly round, as in a circle, always moving outward according to the rules of perspective; nearer at hand, a lesser circle carried the yellow lights upon its rim slowly inward toward the train.

Below the town the rails came to an end, or seemed to. Here was the sharpest curve on the road, but it was passed in safety and a deep rock cut charged. How putrid the yellowish-green stone walls! Another mile-

post, and just beyond, the unholy fumes of a great iron furnace with pillars of flame topping its tall cupolas; then into a stretch of straight track, which roused the Nepos to a frenzy of glee. A shriek of the whistle as the engine plunged past a large station. The rows of lamps were alone discernable. Poughkeepsie!—seventy-five miles to New York.

The Nepos was now doing a mile a minute. Swinging heavily, she sprang across a causeway—the river, dark and sullen, on the right, and a stagnant pond on the shoreward side. The Nepos was beating her record. The inside door of the furnace was white hot.

In a deep cut, whence the rails led, a dark object was descried across the track. A man! Bowcher shuddered. Another human life. Some drivers turn gray when made executioners. He shut off steam. Too late. A flash of the head-light! Not a man, only a fragment of the rocky ledge from the height above. Bowcher knew its composition, though not a geologist. God had doubly spared him. The stone was rotten, as a shower of pieces that shattered all the glass in the cab attested. These, the Break Neck Hills, below which, as a whirlwind, an express passed northward on the up-track.

"Shake your grate bars," ordered Bowcher, cool and grim.

Onward, as the Hudson water runs. The head-light was burning low, but the driver sprang out upon the narrow footpath and turned it higher. He was back

in half a minute. Danger ahead now at every curve, for the night express was not far in front.

Meanwhile the locomotive clove St. Anthony's Nose, and soon left the Highlands behind. The next curve revealed the train they pursued. There it stood to the right, on a siding. Fast, O glowing Nepos! Only a confused glimmer of lighted car windows, a stratum of warmed air, and darkness swallowed the flying "special" again. Just opposite the grim Franciscan convent, a mile below, the Chicago express, on the up-track, hailed the wanderer with a shriek, and passed, like a hurricane. Ten miles of clear road now, at least. Unwilling to endanger his stoker's life, Bowcher went forward and oiled the piston-rods.

In the stretch below Croton, water was taken from the track-trough. The spray drenched the resolute man at the car door, but not a feature of his face quivered.

Across a stretch of bay, the engineer saw the lamps at Sing-Sing, and the white light of an engine standing on the down track. He called to Rawson, who sprang over the tender and joined him. Bowcher exclaimed, pointing ahead:

"Something 's wrong with the express. There 's a relief waiting its arrival."

"How 'll we get by?" asked the passenger, comprehending the situation clearly.

"We must take that engine, and leave ours."

"Certainly."

"Have you the nerve?"

"Try me."

The Nepos was stopped within a few feet of the waiting locomotive.

"Follow me," said Bowcher, as he sprang out of his own cab, and into that of the engine ahead.

The driver was sitting on his bunk eating supper. Bowcher almost hustled him off.

"Take the Nepos, coal her, and bring down the express. This gentleman goes through ahead of all trains."

He nodded toward Walter Rawson, who had already ensconced himself in the seat on the stoker's side. Bowcher seized the lever, and the Baron Steuben moved off without her rightful driver.

Not until fairly under way did Rawson remember that his secretary, Wilder Joy, had been left asleep in the baggage car behind the Nepos.

Unacquainted with the Baron Steuben, Bowcher made a series of hasty but exhaustive experiments. He tried all the gauges; then the damper. Steam only 105!

"Heat her," he shouted, as the engine emerged from the tunnel under Sing Sing prison, and upon the graceful curve that sweeps shoreward past the country house of a President of this nation. Next the village of Tarrytown. It was only ten o'clock, but a high rate of speed was no longer possible, because of numerous local trains on this section, with whose movements as "extra man" from up the road he was unacquainted.

Working safely down to Spuyten Duyvel, thence

across the bridge to Manhattan Island, and along the dark shadow of Fort Washington, spurts of speed were made only where the track was visible some distance ahead. Finally, the avenue, with its lighted taverns and shops was reached. Thence across toward the Thirtieth Street station, among a wilderness of lights, the Baron Steuben moved.

At Tenth Avenue, Walter sprang from the cab of the yet moving engine, and, running to the front of the station, secured a coupé. Five minutes later, he was set down at the door of a house adjacent to the Cyclops building, on a side street. Entering with a latch-key, he reached the president's room by a route known only to himself and Ixbars.

Awaiting him he found his faithful lieutenant, who had taken every precaution in his power to prepare for the expected assault. Rawson saw, in walking about the building, that he had not returned a moment too soon. Treason was already plotting within the barred doors. In the twinkling of an eye his presence inspired fidelity. He was distrustful of the motley crowd of men that Ixbars had gathered from the train-gangs and workshops of the Cyclops road. In most cases this was their first visit to the city, and they were bent on a debauch. Ixbars informed Rawson that they were all armed, and it required only a glance to detect that they were nearly all drunk. A dangerous element, surely; perilous to friend and foe. But Ixbars understood them, or thought he did. Was he not the child of the people? Rawson was not reassured, though these

specimens of the public cheered to the echo when Ixbars waved his hand and said :

"Behold my gallant three hundred !"

Not since the intrusion of the mob into the palace of Versailles has such a spectacle been witnessed. Sleeping on the cloth-covered tables and desks, sprawling on the ebony chairs, lounging on the satin upholstered sofas, were the men of the multitude—the poletariat. Their clothes reeked with the grease of the round-houses and the soot of the forges, and the air from their lungs was tainted with the odors of rum and bad tobacco. They passed that memorable night in a carouse.

An attempt was made, as had been predicted, to force the doors ; but the entrances to the building were found barricaded and defended by a gang of desperadoes. That the dangers of an assault upon the fortress might be fully understood, a few rounds of blank cartridge were fired from the upper windows over the heads of the throng in the street. The storming party had threatened to carry the place at the pistol's muzzle, if need be, but it was not prepared to find the defence ready for a deadly encounter.

A proposition for a truce and for a parley on the following afternoon was received from the besiegers about daylight. Rawson welcomed it as relieving the suspense of the hour. He retired to his private office to snatch a few minutes of sleep.

At the sight of his secretary's desk he recalled Wilder Joy's abandonment of the railroad. He re-

gretted it, because a less faithful man might not forgive such treatment. Joy's fidelity, however, he did not doubt—a confidence he was doomed to see rewarded after the manner of the world. Joy did not reappear at his post. He went over to the enemy—secrets and soul. He sold the valuable information he possessed to Worden at a high price.

But the truce of a day strung out into weeks.

Pending the resumption of hostilities, a marriage ceremony occurred at "The Willows." Mootla became Mrs. John Burnaby. It did not surprise Walter Rawson, though he had not been entrusted with the secret by Mootla until a week before the event. He was not present, but sent a gift worth a small fortune.

The ceremony was performed by the most conspicuous parson of New England—a bright, ambitious young bachelor. He addressed, every Sunday, a congregation of one thousand pretty women who worshiped in a charming Gothic bird-cage that cost a million of money to rear.

After the wedding dinner, Mr. and Mrs. Burnaby drove into Boston and to the wharf at which lay their beautiful steam yacht, the *Calypso*. Everything was ready for the voyage, and the moment Burnaby touched the deck he gave the command to "cast off." The *Calypso* put to sea at once on a wedding journey that included several ports in the West Indies and a brief stay at Nassau, in the Bahamas.

Thus happily began the married life of Jack and Mootla.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE GULF STREAM.

CANAVERAL light stood twelve miles off the starboard beam. The *Calypso* was steaming steadily southward against a quartering sea.

It was the period between sunset and dark, which in the northern latitudes is called twilight, but in the neighborhood of the tropics has no name, because of its briefness.

Under a bright-colored awning, at the bow of the trim little steamer, sat a man and wife.

The Gulf Stream, that mysterious "river in the ocean," had been in sight all day to the eastward, carrying on its rippling borders sprigs of grass from the Caribbean Sea, and, at frequent intervals, bearing northward a tiny nautilus, with its bulging sail of rainbow hues.

The gray sand dunes of the Florida coast had long since sunk into the night, but above the shadowy waste, as a caution, and yet a greeting, was the resplendant beacon—a glowing, sun-like star, though fed by the hand of man.

What sociability there is in a light; what confidences it invokes!

We, as readers and writer, have contemplated the

green apples of love; have seen them fall in the first storm. Now let us study, if we dare, the ripe fruit—that which has survived, and will run its earthly course in safety.

The man and wife had been talking and thinking, as they sat together on a sofa that had been brought on deck from the cabin.

"The secret of happiness certainly is contentment," said she.

"And are you contented?" he asked.

"My happiness is complete," she affirmed. "The wifely state is so different from what my imagination had painted it. The faith in mankind with which it inspires me evokes my own admiration. Dear Jack, I'm so indescribably happy," and she cast herself upon his bosom, and wound her soft, sinuous arms about the great fellow's neck.

Burnaby did not make the slightest effort to disengage himself. The delight he experienced was a revelation to him. The twain were silent a moment; then she said, looking into his eyes as tenderly as though the deepening shadows had not almost hidden them:

"We have been married a week."

"True, Mootla. It does not seem so long."

"But is the fifty-secondth part of one year," she said, slowly, even meditatively.

"Right again, my girl."

"We have solved the sweet mystery of marriage, and must, sooner or later, reach the practical problem of dwelling together 'as long as we both shall live,'"

She repeated the words exactly in the tone of the minister who had married them, and with a deep, sepulchral effect that would have been ludicrous had it not been so apt a bit of mimicry. "'As long as we both shall live.'" Then she added, cheerily: "How's it to be accomplished?"

"Really, I hadn't thought of any difficulties in the way."

"Nor had I, until this moment," she continued. "But, as I sat here gazing at that beacon-light, I recognized its value—the wisdom and forethought that caused it to be put there. I wondered why the matrimonial sea has no coast-lights, when the majority of people who adventure on it are wrecked. Can't we avoid the shoal water, my dear husband? Instead of drifting, cannot we steam along on a safe course, like that laid for the gallant boat beneath us? Let our compass be a mutual understanding——"

"A treaty?"

"Yes, if you don't get your metaphors mixed. One that will carry us through life. A sort of Monroe Doctrine, perhaps, not to dignify it with the name of treaty."

"Exactly! What a great idea!"

"But practical?" she interrogated.

"Thoroughly so," he admitted.

"There must be a philosophy of marriage," she resumed. "If there be such a science as political economy——"

"Which I doubt."

"So do I. But I say if there be such a science, the first chapter of every treatise on the subject ought to begin with a marriage ceremony."

"It would certainly be an innovation," he answered, incredulously.

"Marriage is the foundation of our alleged civilization," she continued. "Jack, we couldn't be here without it?"

That specious query—a woman's argument, which is most effective when it is no argument at all—completely captured Burnaby. And yet it was merely a sophism, put by a bright woman. The key to it is that their happiness might have been just as great somewhere else.

"You would, if possible, formulate a policy for the married?" he asked.

"No, dear Jack, I have no ambition beyond our future. I would wish to ensure for ourselves contented lives?"

"Very good, my dear girl. We have started right. We have been happy."

"Yes, supremely so. Too happy. That's the danger I descry."

"You fear it will not endure?"

"Don't mistake me, dear John,"—she always called him John when she was in a serious mood. "I am more distrustful of myself than of you. I seek to prolong the perfect contentment, the mutual pride, the abiding confidence we now enjoy."

"You seek——"

"Peace!"

"O, you sublime creature." And Burnaby folded her in his arms, and kissed her rapturously a dozen times.

He admired the majesty of her intellect, capable of simultaneously enjoying the bliss of the honeymoon and looking far enough into the future to see that a day must come when passion would cool, and romance become reality. Not a trace of selfishness in this intuitive foresight. What a treasure had he captured! What a noble specimen of womanhood sat by his side?

"You are silent, dear John," she murmured. "Do you dislike to hear me talk so seriously. It was in the fullness of joy I spoke. Then, too, the dark waters all about us are to blame for it; the stars that now do shine; yonder light that warns us, though it twinkles '*Bon voyage*'; the very air that fans my glowing cheeks is vitalized by the warmth of a fairy river, along whose watery banks we travel. Think of the time, the place, my own dear man."

"Both time and place are opportune, my little wife," spoke Burnaby. "I have not failed to note the wrecks floating on the sea of matrimony; how few families survive the first gale, or, weathering it, toss out a water-logged existence without hope of haven. Signals of distress, unrecognized by the law, unheeded, even mocked by society, are to be found on every parallel of social longitude. Matrimony is in need of a weather bureau. You have suggested one. The idea is great. It 's yours. It 's Mootla."

SHE—"And feasible?"

HE—"Yes,"

Burnaby meditated for a time. Then he asked, impulsively:

"Wherein is the happiness of married life?"

Mootla did not reply for a full minute. Then her cheeks burned and her face became radiant.

"Shall I answer?" she asked, as she nestled closely under the protecting shelter of his arm.

"Certainly, my own darling. We are one. Wherein, think you, shall we find this happiness we seek?"

"In our children," she almost whispered, as she hid her face, suffused with blushes, on his breast.

Burnaby's manly heart gave a great throb. He raised Mootla's face, with its eyes tightly closed, and kissed her on each cheek as an emperor might have greeted a princess royal. He could not speak. The majesty of the moment overcame him.

Here was a new responsibility already confronting him. Like every other young man who has married, he found himself confronted with the greatest of all social problems—the rearing of a family. But, was not Mootla right? he mused. Of course she was. She was divine.

On the air floated a message which Burnaby's ear alone could comprehend. It re-echoed in his heart, passed out again upon the breeze, only to return with the mental picture of desolate Cotton Mather, seated alone in his great drawing-room, thinking of his pet child and her changed condition. Burnaby held his

wife closer and closer, without fear of bruising her, as he proudly thought, but dared not confide even to the tattling wind, lest it might render an old man's heart more sad :

"*My* little Mootla now ; God bless her."

Burnaby wondered, then, why he had never contemplated founding a home—that source of the ethical current. He had imagined himself a student of social science, its laws, its impulses, its mutations and progress ; but here was a young woman at his side who showed him, in three words, how ignorant be was. He recalled the confidence, the unconscious bravado, with which he had grappled serious problems involving the political future of Europe and America when he was a child in his knowledge regarding the family—the source of our alleged civilization. And he had taken upon himself the grave responsibility of perpetuating this very institution of which he was so ignorant—the family. He became almost frightened as the thought grew upon him.

Mootla did not interrupt his reflections. She could not possibly have imagined what was passing in her husband's mind. She was still looking far ahead along the Gulf Stream's course. She saw, in mental vision, the warm equatorial ocean where it attained its primary impulse, but she remembered that after its procession was run it dashed upon the frigid coasts of Labrador and Scotland ; it met the icebergs and wasted all its heat in melting them ; it carried the tropical fauna upon its tide until destruction overtook them amid

the frozen seas. It was delusive—like all else in this world. She remembered the gayly-colored nautilus. Where was the point at which the nautilus forsook the warm tide? Where was the first chill? Ah, that was the sublime question. That point avoided, man and woman might readily achieve perfect happiness.

Another thought took possession of her. Was the old adage true: Did intimacy really induce contempt? Was entire confidence possible? Must the woman never strive to find out facts about her husband which she really did not want to know? Must she keep her eyes closed far enough not to see the faults in her companion? Or, seeing the blemishes, were they to be discussed, and mutually recognized and admitted? Perhaps only oddities, peculiarities, existed. When recognized, who was to decide them faults? If admitted, which partner to the bond was to be allowed the larger number? The man? Yes. Naturally a woman would think so, she was impartial enough to admit. But was she right? No; had not she, Mootla, more eccentricities than any man who ever lived? Indeed she had, was her mature decision. Even her name was a vagary, a wild freak in which a gentle, generous world had humored her. Being so, how could her husband, the one being most precious to her among the world's billion, endure her after he found her out? After he had studied her critically—as no doubt he would! Ah! what was the part of wisdom? This: To establish a peace while the most amicable relations lasted.

There was nothing to tell Burnaby about her life further than he already knew. Cotton Mather, at Mootla's command, had given the suitor for his ward's hand her entire history, even to many minute details not set down in this true history. Hereafter Burnaby could only learn what he discovered for himself. But, would not a day come—an unfortunate day—in which Burnaby, her own Jack Burnaby, would study her critically? Would he not look at her as a social problem similar to the labor question, the equities of aliens, or the State's duties to its orphans—all of which he discussed and analyzed so clearly? Would he not give her, his wife, the same close consideration and study, and reach a definite conclusion of some kind? She believed he would. But much as she knew, Mootla did not know man. In that respect she was borrowing trouble.

This couple belonged to the new generation, not the old. They had plunged into matrimony after the traditionally impetuous fashion, but they had risen to the surface sooner, and were already sensibly looking about for a beacon by which to lay their course in life.

CHAPTER XXV.

FALL OF A PILLAR.

DURING the two months' truce between Walter Rawson and his antagonists several momentous events occurred—events that in themselves would have conquered any but a resolute man.

Ixbars was dead.

He had not yielded up his life to the defence of the Great Cyclops Company, as might have been expected from his heroism on the night of the assault, but had been shot down miserably by a rival lover of one of his several lady friends.

The cause of the quarrel would have been ridiculous had it not terminated so gravely, for Ixbars was killed on account of a pair of gum galoches.

He had always taken great care of his health; he atoned for every act of dissipation by the most rigid attention to his doctor's advice. Among other things, the physician had cautioned him against a disposition to goutiness which lurked in his system, and had advised him to wear rubber shoes whenever the weather was damp.

Ixbars, who generally had an original way of doing everything, at once purchased a box of gum shoes, and had a pair left at each of the households which he more

or less maintained for his use in the event of sudden showers or snow. When the particular pair of gum shoes that was sent to the cosey dwelling of Miss Mamie Dindwiddie reached their destination the lady was entertaining a gentleman in the parlor. The package, neatly tied up as it had been ordered to be, was by some mistake brought directly to her, and when she in her surprise opened it a small perfumed note fell out upon the floor. Before she could interfere her companion took it up, and read:

"MEASELUM LITTLE GURL—Pleez put these gums behint your door or where they will be safe. I may want them. Ever your lumpsom,

"IXEY."

The conduct of the young lady's visitor was, to say the least, characteristic of prompt action, however much wanting in propriety. He gently took the package from her hands, stepped to the front door, and threw the shoes into the middle of the street.

A few evenings after this, as Ixbars was entering a hotel he was shot down by this man who had insulted his gum shoes.

Amid great commotion, the wounded man was carried to a room and his friends summoned. Rawson, ever prompt to act in great emergencies, was almost the first person at the bedside of the dying man. Nogood and Goshock were both sent for, but only Nogood responded.

Poor Ixbars was in great agony of mind and body—realizing that he had lost his life and his sweetheart.

That was a wild night in New York. The streets were filled with people who tramped about in the snow and the slush, and asked each other in bated breath: "What does it mean?" "Has the Tombs been mobbed yet?" "Will the assassin be lynched?" "Is it the end of the Cyclops ring?" Broadway imperfectly cleared of snow by the political friends of the Cyclops people, was a canal bordered by banks of ice, streaked with the filth of the city. The street crossings were sloughs. Through an expanse of foul snow the great throng of pedestrians waded and floundered, ankle deep.

In addition to all these discomforts, as the word was passed that the wounded man was dying up-stairs in the great hotel—the Grand Llama, by the way—a muggy rain, which had been threatening all day, began to fall. It was not one of those winter rainstorms which by its dash and fury enlivens rather than depresses the heart—inspiring a tighter clutch upon our souls—but, beginning with a gentle, steam-like vapor it soon became a drizzling shower, falling in wavy lines and insinuating its dampness through clothing and umbrellas. It penetrated to the interior of the cars and the stages. No waterproof or closed *coupé* could shut it out. No exercise of which the pedestrian was capable was sufficiently enlivening to stir the sluggish pulse. Upon the dumb animals, servants of man, the effect of such a night was no less pitiable.

If it seemed chaos in the streets, how much more

it appeared so to the watchers by the death-bed. There, friendless and alone, lay the popular idol and the gallant of the Cyclops ring, the greatest commercial corporation in the new world. The few men who stood about the couch conversed in whispers, and every face, except Rawson's, wore the shadow of despair. The apartment was carefully guarded from intruders, and it is an actual fact that many of the dying man's last hours were passed without the presence of any physician.

Ixbar's usefulness being at an end, it was none the less desirable to have him take to the oblivion of the grave all the guilty secrets he shared.

Thus they stood, waiting for Ixbars to die, and, in a manner so customary to him, he obliged them, and yielded up the ghost. His body lay in state in the magnificent offices of the Cyclops company on the following day—Ixbars of the multitude and the model of a rising generation that had already begun its warfare against society. His corpse was conveyed to the grave, and the band of his own pet regiment, which he had organized and uniformed, preceded the funeral cortége, playing "The Dead March" from Saul.

But hot upon the calamity followed another crushing blow for Walter Rawson.

Although it was now only the middle of March, barely ninety days since the bold move that brought Nogood forward as one of the Cyclops managers, that arch thief was absolutely in jail, charged by the law officer of the municipality with common, or rather un-

common, robbery. He had been re-arrested on new charges, and, strange to say, could not find the $100,000 bail demanded.

So, in the hour when help was most needed, the political prop of the ring was wanting. Its drum-major, Ixbars, was dead. Rawson's steps were shadowed by the paid spies of the Cyclops opposition, and on his part he never moved out of his house or office without having a few trusty defenders within call.

In the darkest of these hours he received a letter, a trifling looking note, that gave him the courage of Hercules. It was written soon after the return of Mr. and Mrs. Burnaby from their wedding journey, and read:

"'THE WILLOWS'—Night.

"DEAR WALTER—I know your danger. Protect yourself at once. Cut loose from every thief as soon as he is detected. Keep the prey in sight—and despair not. Remember the eclipse. The moon may wane, but it fulls again.

"Be vigilant in misfortune. Burn out your heart and toss your conscience to the four winds of heaven —as are scattered the ashes of the holy Brahmins.

"MOOTLA."

Rawson kept himself under lock and key, and distrusted everybody. Alone he worked out the solution of the situation, giving to his character the royal patent of genius. Holding the decrees of courts in contempt and the united power of his foes at bay, he planned a ten days' campaign, that for novelty and brilliancy is not equalled in the history of speculation.

Supreme egotist as he was, Rawson could read the

world's opinion of his actions in the hearts of other men. He knew that odium and contempt attached to his name. Some of it was justly deserved, some was not. He was frank with himself—a difficult confidence to make. Therefore, a complete surrender on his part would boom the Cyclops stock. He would yield.

He gathered up 50,000 shares at prices varying from $39 to $41—the certificates at the latter figure being taken in only a few hours before he abdicated.

When he was prepared, Rawson sent to the leaders of the Anglo-American combination a message of conciliation. He was ready, he said, to turn over the company's property to its lawful managers.

A meeting was arranged between Mr. Clinchall, the new figurehead of the Cyclops selected by Gen. Worden and Walter Rawson. It took place a few hours later in the day. Rawson's haughtiness toward Clinchall was noticed by everybody present. There was ample reason for it, because this cruiser on the Barbary coast had narrowly escaped going ashore early in his career, because of a false beacon waved before his eyes by this same Clinchall, and known as the "Saginaw Salt." As to honor between them, Rawson knew that the odds were in his own favor.

The deposed president slowly descended the marble stairway for the last time, entered his cab, and drove off. He had only to wait.

Relieved of the damning incubus of Rawson's name, the price of Cyclops rose 34 "points" in three weeks. The ex-president unloaded his entire lot in the neigh-

borhood of $75 per share, realizing $1,650,000 profits. He then began to sell stock that he did not possess, going "short" to the extent of 45,000 shares, and as low as $66.

About that time the new management discovered that twenty millions of bonds supposed to be in the treasury were missing. Rawson gave the fact the widest publicity. The price of Cyclops fell with a crash to $41 a share, enabling this bold man to purchase what he had agreed to deliver at an average profit of thirty per cent. A neat scoop of $1,300,000!

This was all very pretty; but "the penitentiary doors yawned for Walter Rawson," said the newspapers and the Clinchall management. Where was he? Nobody knew. He couldn't be found. He was indicted for embezzlement on half a dozen counts.

Rumors of the utter bankruptcy of the Cyclops Company were assiduously circulated. It was asserted that millions had been embezzled by Rawson and his colleagues. For four days this suspense lasted.

Giving instructions over the private wire from his house, where he was snugly ensconced, Rawson bought Cyclops at its lowest figures. A declining market had no terrors for him.

When the trap was loaded again he caused the following brief note to President Clinchall to be published in all the newspapers:

"My Dear Sir—In the excitement of surrendering the Cyclops management to you a few days ago, I forgot to mention that you will find in box 3345 of the

Muscovite Safe Deposit Company, bonds of the Cyclops Company to the amount of $20,785,000. Not a coupon is missing. I have authorized the delivery of the property to you.

"I congratulate you on the sound financial condition of the great corporation which you have been chosen to direct. I herewith send you a statement of the company's assets that will greatly assist you. Sincerely,

"WALTER RAWSON."

To this letter was appended in the newspapers such a clear exposition of the financial condition of the road that the stock regained in a few hours all it had depreciated. This was the quickest "turn" Rawson ever made. His sales on the long account netted him $800,000.

When the weary struggle was ended, Walter Rawson returned for a few days to his old home. There he answered Mootla's letter:

"CRUMPET, Saturday.

"DEAR MOOTLA—Your brave words saved me. I have ruined them all. In recognition of your sympathy I sold the new management 5,000 Cyclops for your account at 74. I have taken it in at 52. Inclosed please find check No. 6740 for profit, $110,000.

"This was their money, every dollar of it, and I am afforded peculiar pleasure in knowing that it is now yours.

"WALTER."

"Magnificent!" exclaimed Mootla, waving the check aloft. "'A whole vengeance in an act,' as Dumas would say."

Twenty-four hours later this check was returned to

Rawson by Burnaby, with a brief but respectful note saying that his wife, Mootla, had no use for the money, as her bank account was ample. He thanked Rawson for his kindness, and there the epistle ended.

The facts were that Mootla had handed the check to her husband to deposit to her credit. Burnaby, who did not approve of Rawson's methods of making money, had simply substituted a check of his own for the amount. He had no objections to Rawson receiving Mootla's thanks for this act of well-meant generosity, but he feared the curse that attached to Rawson's money.

Rawson was now the popular hero of Wall Street. No one any longer disputed his supremacy. His wonderful resources, the vast capital that he controlled and could hurl, like a missile from a catapult, at the stock market, made him feared and courted by friends and enemies.

One of the metropolitan journals published a sketch of Rawson in which he was called "a rocket." Two weeks later, to a day, Cotton Mather purchased that newspaper and converted its editor into a literary porcupine, companion to his brood of ichneumons.

But about this time he unfortunately lost one of his oldest and staunchest friends—Jack Burnaby. They met one afternoon at Delmonico's, corner of Chambers Street. Rawson took Burnaby aside and asked, point blank :

"Will you sell *The Cyclone!*"

"No, indeed. Where did you get such an idea ?"

"I suppose you would if you could get your price."

"The money of Monte Cristo wouldn't purchase *The Cyclone.* The only way you can buy it is to pay four cents for it on the street."

"It has been attacking me lately. I thought you might want to sell it."

"That will do, Rawson. You 're an old friend, and I choose to overlook the insult. But this is the end"—and he turned on his heel."

They never spoke again; but *The Cyclone* continued its exposures of the tricks and artifices of Walter Rawson. Its good intentions availed nothing. The gudgeons came to the net of the blind pool quite as plentifully.

Cotton Mather already owned a newspaper and an editor with a lofty mind; Rawson had believed he ought to have one also, with an assortment of financial writers. These two gentlemen were not exercised about the rapid progress of journalism toward the borderlands of an exact art; but they wanted a means of reaching the general public in disguise, and they intended "to work the press for all it was worth."

With all their wide experience, those two skeptics continued to believe in what was once called "The Power of the Press." They belonged to the only class of observing people that still held to such convictions. Their reasons were good ones, as will be shown.

Rawson's management of the blind pool was such

as to strike terror into the hearts of his rivals in business. He disdained all the familiar tricks of the street. "Only one thing at a time" had been the maxim of his boldest predecessors. They had a horror of getting "astride" the market—that is, going "short" of some stocks and "long" of others at the same time. Rawson and Mather had detected the fallacy of this axiom, and just here it was that "the power of the press" was utilized.

Rawson kept control of a few lines of dividend-paying properties, and these he invariably advanced in the midst of a most savage attack on non-dividend specialties. The system admitted of endless variations of method.

The Blind Pool's journals were cleverly managed. Cotton Mather's paper attacked Rawson violently at times, and was openly arrayed against the schemes in which it charged him with being interested, but with which, in reality, he had little or nothing to do. It dwelt upon the uncertainties of the "fancies" and the "nickel-plated curios" which the pool was depressing, but which Rawson was charged with carrying in fabulous amounts; at the same time it pointed out the advisability of putting one's money into property that yielded certain income, and was safe from violent fluctuations.

However much the readers of the journal—which everybody who speculated watched carefully—doubted its good faith, they were certain to ponder over the sage wisdom of its editor. The longer they deliber-

ated the more convinced were they that the particular article then before them was not written to mislead. A frankness in dealing with the condition of the market characterized the course of the journal that charmed even its most suspicious readers. "Surely," they reasoned in their hearts, "the wicked editor is away, and his truly good partners are in charge for the time."

So, after several days' careful deliberation, during which the high-priced stocks had advanced eight or ten points (additional proof of the accuracy of the journalistic judgment !) and the low stocks had been thrown away at rapidly-declining figures (convincing testimony as to the disinterested nature of the warning), the great public came in with a rush ? The "lambs" sold out all their "fancies," pocketed their losses, and instead of banking their scanty balances, reinvested them in the "staples" at the top prices. Grand change !

Within a few days, likely as not in a few hours, the veracious organs chanted a different tune. The lambs were not frightened, however. Have "the wicked partners" returned, and resumed their sway ? No, innocence ! The wind has changed. Rather say the weather vane has swung, moved by an unseen hand beneath. 'Tis the weather-cock that gives direction to the currents in this part of the sky—not the wind that influences it. The communicating cranks are hidden, but the masked control is there !

"Oh ! then, unhappy ones ! How could you all have

been so blind? Read, and know the madness of paying more for anything than it is worth:

"The Lake Shower might possibly be desirable at par, but at 140 it is similar to buying nitro-glycerine—dear and dangerous."

And this writer actually uses the word "possibly!" But, read further, lovely lamb, if only to see how logically an editor can think:

"The crowning satisfaction in purchasing low-priced stocks is that one knows exactly how much he can lose!"

What could be truer than this? If a man gave voice to such an astonishing bit of wisdom in a counting-room his best friend would kick him; but, being found in the newspapers, it 's great. Still more is the reader edified to learn:

"The heretofore neglected cheap stocks are at their lowest imaginable figures, and are certain to advance when the market changes, as it surely will in a very few days. Then there will be a spurt toward higher prices that will astonish everybody. . . . It should not be forgotten that *one can buy twice as many shares of stock selling below 50 as he can of 'gilt-edged' certificates quoted above par.*"

Think of it!

It 's a siren's tune, and many a good man has heard it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAW OF REPRISAL.

WALTER RAWSON had sheared the lambs of the political estate—local and national. The few persons who had escaped him had drawn out of speculation, satisfied with moderate gains. The capital of "the blind pool" now exceeded thirty millions. Rawson was its front and figure-head, and his partner's connection was not even suspected by the commercial savants of Wall Street.

These ambidextrous knights of retribution prepared to give the professional politicians the death-stroke.

Cotton Mather's cynocism was unlike Rawson's. He no longer believed in the existence of integrity and sincerity. Out of an overweening patriotism had been evolved a positive contempt for the political methods of his country. He had assigned to himself a mission in life. Construing the word "retribution" as a synonym for "justice," he had appointed himself its dispenser.

The part that Cotton Mather took in directing the management of this vast retaliation campaign was by no means inconsiderable. He never went into Wall Street, because he believed that a bird's-eye view of the

field is often the best. While Rawson is engaged in this hand to hand contest on the floor of the Stock Exchange, Mather was protecting his flanks and watching the movements of the enemy. He did not think and act simultaneously, as did Rawson. He had not the mastery of details that the younger man possessed, but as an originating mind his was marvelous. Great ideas came to him most readily in repose. Nothing was too stupendous for him to dare undertake. Had he resolved, in the quiet of his chamber, to annex Canada or Mexico to the United States, he resolutely could have set about shaping events to that end.

Cotton Mather owed his mental strength almost wholly to his faculties of memory and observation; his acuteness as a looker-on in this world had brought him half his original fortune. Even as late in life as when we first saw him at "The Willows" he was prompted to introduce the mowing-machine into India—and did so with great profit—because he observed that the sacred cow preferred to eat cut grass. Indeed, it would have been difficult to apportion the credit for some of the yawning breaches made in the stock market by the financial catapult.

Difficult as it may have seemed, these two men often met in secret and calmly discussed their present and prospective enterprises. The two houses were connected by private wires and by telephones. A line from Rawson's house to his office was also switched into connection with Mather whenever the younger speculator started down town. One of these meetings

was destined to change the face of nature on this globe.

"We must now get control of the Mississippi river," began Cotton Mather, as soon as he had warmed his hands at the grate fire.

"We already manage the barges, the steamboat traffic, and one railroad along its banks," suggested Rawson, in the dark as to his coadjutor's meaning.

"Yes, I know," exclaimed the old man, impatiently.

"But we must own the river itself——"

"And let other people do the work while we collect the tolls and freights," added Rawson, laughing heartily at the apparent absurdity of his own words.

"That's the idea exactly."

Rawson ceased his hilarity. His face mobilized instantly as he said:

"It's stupendous in conception and detail, but I see it clearly. A company with one hundred millions of capital. Think of it! One million shares!" and Rawson's eyes grew large and tiger-like.

"We shall put ourselves down for half the stock, as 'insiders.' One dollar a share for us; the public will cry for it at a hundred," interjected Cotton Mather, rubbing his hands gleefully.

"We'll utilize everything on the river and its tributaries that can be turned to profit," resumed Rawson, "from the copper ores of Lake Pemidji to the great Red River raft."

"Yes; that raft will furnish kindling wood for the civilized world," added the old merchant.

"We shall control the ice supply of New Orleans. Every bale of cotton that comes North, and every bushel of corn that is sent South to pay for it, will yield us tolls," Rawson rattled on.

"Promises well—eh, Walter?" interjected the originator, watching his companion's enthusiasm.

"We shall control all the water-power from Pokegama Falls to Keokuk. The Government proposes to build great gunworks at Rock Island. Its action must be delayed until we own the river. We must bridge the Mississippi at St. Louis, and levy toll on every car that crosses."

"Isn't it gigantic?" demanded Mather, as the dimensions and grand possibilities of his scheme grew upon him.

"Magnificent," answered Rawson, who saw only the intellectual sublimity of the original idea.

"Prodigious?"

"Symmetrical!"

"Astounding?"

"Brilliant!"

"Marvelous?"

"Dazzling!"

"Tremendous?"

"Splendid! But, give it a name."

"I have it: 'The National Improvement Company,'" Mather hastened to say.

Walter Rawson tacitly accepted the suggestion, for he dashed into details:

"The act of incorporation must read 'The Missis-

sippi River and its Tributaries.' Don't you see, that will enable us to take possession of the Missouri, the Ohio and the Red Rivers when we so desire."

"Yes, yes; I have thought of all that."

"But, my dear sir, a bill will have to be got through Congress sanctioning this job——"

Cotton Mather sprang to his feet. His entire manner, even his countenance, changed. He walked about excitedly. Walter, and all his startling theorizations, was forgotten. Mather saw only his foe.

"Leave that to me," he exclaimed. "Ah! that's where my interest in this undertaking comes in. Leave the bill to me."

"Will the country stand it?"

"You know it will," retorted the old man, waxing angry within. "A nation that has calmly seen its Congress vote away two or three belts of land twenty miles wide and two thousand miles long to railway corporations, besides guaranteeing millions of interest annually and allowing the beneficiaries to default to the government while they were paying dividends on the stock—such a people, I say, will stand anything. Why, *we* only ask the control of a strip of water three thousand miles long, and less than two miles wide, on an average," he exclaimed, in conclusion.

"Very well; then you will come to the front in this matter?" replied Walter, interrogatively, neither assenting to nor dissenting from the elder man's declaration.

"I will. The next move is to make sure that the

national prosperity continues," resumed Cotton Mather, in a sarcastic tone. "There must not be any sudden change in the administration at Washington. Every outside dabbler in stocks must be converted into 'a bull on the country.'"

"But, the bill," suggested Rawson, impatiently.

"Having procured a general corporation charter, under the laws of New Jersey, Delaware, or some other liberal State, we shall spring the enterprise in the National Congress, whenever a majority of its members have been properly convinced of its merits. Why, Walter, you 'll see it go through as smoothly as a River and Harbor Bill. There 'll be money in it for everybody. It will make a millionaire of every faithful friend of the company. It will re-distribute the national wealth. I shall have more applicants with votes than we shall need. 'Will the country stand it?' Lord bless you, yes."

"Well, it 's a go," said Rawson. "I admit that I was staggered in the first round."

"We shall grow with it," continued the father of the scheme. "In a quarter of a century it will outrival the East India Company. It's stock will be worth a thousand dollars per share at the end of ten years. We shall lay out new towns, colonize them, seize the railroads that enter them, until in time we shall control the politics in every state along the Mississippi banks."

"But there may be adverse legislation later on."

"We must get our grip on the future. No legisla-

tion, Walter, can destroy capital as fast as we can create it."

With this reassuring statement the interview terminated.

Despite Mather's enthusiasm in Walter's presence, it was a secret which he whispered only to his innermost heart that his sole object in introducing this gigantic measure into Congress was to revenge himself for the wanton injuries inflicted upon him and his business associates by unwise or corrupt legislation. He had been a good hater from his early manhood, and now the floodgates of his wrath and contempt were opened on the members of Congress.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BRANDING IRON.

"THE National Improvement Company" was incorporated in the state of Delaware. Its charter was smuggled through the Legislature one afternoon under a suspension of the rules. Cotton Mather was bound to admit, however, that some of the legislators of the snug little State were not so inexperienced as he had been led to believe. The bill had required prompt handling, and its passage had cost considerable money. There were fewer votes wanted than in a larger State, but not a single member allowed himself to go too cheaply on that account. The charter was broad enough in scope for any purpose, and admitted of managing every branch of business from a river-side trading-post to a line of ocean steamships. The company was also authorized to conduct "a general commission business." Its nominal capital under the charter, was ten million dollars, with the privilege of increasing it to fifty millions when the necessary national legislation had been secured.

Cotton Mather organized, from members of the disaffected shipping houses of New York and Boston, a board of directors to supplant the "dummies" he had incorporated in the original charter, and when Congress

met he was ready for the next move. The company came before the National Legislature with a request for remarkable grants and privileges. It asked the exclusive right to conduct a general warehouse business along the navigable portion of the Mississippi river, and in consideration for agreeing to build jetties and construct canals that would insure a sufficient depth of water at all seasons, asked a Government subsidy of one million dollars per year.

The bill was introduced by one of the most innocent Congressmen on the floor, "Honest Bill Hodge," of John Brown's Tract. Without guile as he was, Hodge was pre-eminently the man for Cotton Mather's purpose. This old innocent had been won with a dinner and a few boxes of cigars. The bill was only read by its title on the day of its introduction, and was referred to the Comittee on Commerce, as requested. There ended the first move.

The Committee on Commerce did not meet for ten days, and in that time Mather's ichneumons had snugly ensconced themselves within the bank accounts of at least a majority of the Committee's members. The remarkable fact was that neither the leader nor his lieutenants made any mistakes. Not a single overture for the bill's support was spurned. This was due to one man, Tom Ray, the Prince of Lobbyists. When, a few weeks later, success was assured, Cotton Mather raised him a step in the new estate of political nobility. He created him the King of the Ichneumons.

Tom Ray was a remarkable person in many ways.

His manners were faultless ; his education was broad ; his experience cosmopolitan. He always dressed in perfect taste, and was equally at ease in the best or worst society. He was, beyond question, the most widely known figure in Washington. Greatest of all his accomplishments was the giving of a dinner-party. His skill in superintending the dressing and serving of a boiled ham was the talk of the civilized world. The dainty of Westphalia became doubly toothsome under his manipulation.

But there was one commodity about which he was even better informed than hams. He knew men. If chartreuse and newly-mown hay developed all the latent qualities of the ham, brandy and champagne opened the heart of men so that it could be looked into. He was really great, because he was able to master and dominate th minds of nearly every statesman he met. Still, there were some members of that Congress that he could not reach. Cotton Mather only shrugged his shoulders when this fact was plainly stated to him. He no longer believed in any man's incorruptibility. He only said that certain kinds of fish required a different class of anglers—even another variety of bait. Therefore he used another type of man—another color of the ichneumon tribe. He gave $25,000 in cash to an editor of national reputation, and a credit of $200,000 at a Washington bank. He told this man, General Chestnut by name, that there was even more money yet for all his friends. This flattered the General's never waning belief in his own impor-

tance, and increased the commercial value of his friendship.

There has not been in this age anything so splendid as life under the sunshine which Cotton Mather threw into that session of Congress. The whole nation felt it and recovered at a bound all its lost vitality. Daylight had long been too brief. The electric light was everywhere introduced. No fears of overproduction influenced the manufacturers. In the shops, the engines were running to their utmost capacity night and day, and duplicate machinery stood ready to move with the touch of a lever or the shifting of a belt when the first machine was worn out. The laboring men profited, too, because there was employment for all. Two workers were needed where one had sufficed before. Trains were speeded to their utmost. Fifty millions of people were awake and moving! Rush, hurry, bang! One great, united nation, with Washington as its center!

The rest of the world may have been indifferent to the future, to the unexampled prosperity of the age; but the members of that Congress were not. They beheld the dawning of universal amity. Many, alas! very many of them, if Cotton Mather's memory can be credited, thumbed the crisp checks and stock certificates distributed so lavishly by the National Improvement Company, and as they did so pledged their fidelity to the blooming civilization. They gazed at the bright, purple-faced stock certificates of the gigantic corporation, and were "bulls on the country." They

studied, in many instances for the first time, the map of the great Republic, traced out the tortuous course of the Mississippi river, and rejoiced that it had *not* been straightened by a previous generation.

Said the distinguished engineer who appeared before the Committee on Commerce as Cotton Mather's hired representative :

"The Mississippi is 3,100 miles long. It is navigable for large steamboats for 2,000 miles. To-day it is the crookedest river in the world ; more liable to overflow than the Nile, and with shoals more treacherous than the Danube. Careful calculations, based upon the government surveys and verified by a tour of personal inspection, justify me in declaring that of its 2,000 miles of navigable waters, 512.5 can be saved by a system of short canals, which will reduce its course to an almost straight line. There is every reason why this great improvement should be accomplished. It will deepen the channel ; it will so increase the current that periods of high water can no longer occasion great inundations. The spring floods will be hurried to the Gulf so rapidly that they cannot gather volume enough to destroy the levees. It will remove the bars at the delta, so that ocean steamers drawing twenty odd feet of water can ascend with ease to St. Louis. The wares and stuffs of the Orient and of Europe can be landed at the wharves along the Mississippi's shores without breaking bulk. There will spring up vast cities, compared with which our present commercial centers are deserted villages. Trunk lines of railway will have

their centers there, radiating to all parts of the nation——"

Every member of the committee was interested. Not a word was lost. Cotton Mather recalled the treatment which he and his colleagues from Boston had received from substantially the same committee only a few years before, and he contrasted that scene with this one.

Ah! how he despised these men in his heart, knowing the reason for their rapt attention!

All this speechmaking was, of course a work of supererogation, because "the thing was fixed," and the committee at once rose, when the advocates of the measure withdrew, and agreed to report the bill favorably, together with an amendment audaciously incorporated by Cotton Mather during the sitting.

Of all the social centers at Washington none compared with Cotton Mather's rooms at the Arlington Hotel. So generous was his hospitality that Congressmen were in the habit of dropping in at any hour of the day, and, even in the absence of the host, ringing the bell to order champagne. The waiters and the tavern-keeper were authorized to furnish the wine; but one of Cotton Mather's faithful ichneumons was always present, and each man's name, with the date and hour, went down in the blue-covered memorandum book to the account of "The Mississippi Bill."

The measure was cleverly brought up for its first reading on the heels of a hard day's struggle over the Equality of Color Bill. Everybody was tired out, and

not more than half the members were present. It was read through so rapidly by the clerk that very few persons understood its contents; none followed the text of the printed bill. Then it was ordered to a second reading, and "a special order" voted calling it up for its final passage a few days later. Cotton Mather declared a scrip dividend in the interval, and a thousand-share certificate reached the hands of every stockholder. It should be stated as a crowning tribute to the sagacity of Tom Ray and General Chestnut that every share was accepted. Some members took it "only as a loan," to be sure; but they received it, just the same.

General Chestnut and Tom Ray were adroit enough to declare to all such as evinced any timidity that "the stockholders of this great and beneficent corporation are merely sharers in the universal prosperity of the country. Everybody in this nation will be rich within a generation. There are one hundred acres of land for each man, woman and child. Why not float with the tide that only meets you earlier in Washington than amid the obscurity of your farms and country towns in the South and West! There the onrolling flood of prosperity will find you, even again," was the insinuating appeal to the congressmen's cupidity. "And then it will be doubly welcome, and will doubly reward you. You will then promptly recognize the harbinger of wealth because you have met it before—here in Washington." And so on, in many keys.

Wicked old Cotton Mather! He was bent on sacri-

ficing his entire fortune, if need be, to prove the corruption that he believed existed among his race. He had convinced himself that the cynic takes the only accurate gauge of human nature.

It was a great day in the House, that on which the Mississippi Bill passed.

There was only one young man who raised his voice against it. When his name was called, he asked to be allowed to explain his vote. He was pale, and his lips quivered with suppressed emotion as he said :

"MR. SPEAKER : We should be aware what we are doing. To-morrow, when too late, we shall begin to repent. No misery known to humanity equals the first awakening of a woman after virtue has been bartered away. All past innocence is buried. The lost one parts company with happy memories for ever. I say to you, as men, that it is a serious act to put an honorable past behind you thus. We are about to truckle to one bold schemer's ambition. Our conduct has been already recognized by the lexicographers. This man's name is linked to all that is rotten in society, infamous in trade, corrupt in legislation, and cringing in the conscience. He is now part of our language, and the verb is 'To Cotton!'"

This brief tirade made a profound sensation.

There was silence for a few moments, but with a smile of pity on his face, the fine old member from John Brown's Tract, father of the bill, rose and asked that the roll-call proceed. The bill passed by a vote of 203 to 41.

Cotton Mather sat in the gallery. His agents, the

lobbyists, moved about the floor during the taking of the vote, openly sustaining the weak members, and thus contributed much to secure the overwhelming victory. The ownership of three-quarters of the House hardly satisfied Mather. To his regret he saw that several fish he had specially wished to catch had slipped through his net. But no fisherman is content with his haul; however full his net, he begrudges the sea every scaly creature that escapes.

In the Senate, the bill had a mere dress-parade. Substantially the same speech, quoted from on a previous page, was delivered by the distinguished engineer before the Senate Committee on Commerce. It is true, there was one prominent Senator, famed for his eloquence, who had privately denounced the job, and declared that he would make "the greatest effort of his life" to defeat it; but, when the day arrived, he dodged all opportunity for debate by remaining in the cloak-room, and contented himself with simply having his name recorded against the measure. Subsequently, it was learned that ex-Surgeon-General Prentiss, the Senator's brother-in-law, had been appointed chief of the medical bureau of the company, at a salary of $25,000 per year.

Hardly had Cotton Mather been apprised of the passage of his bill by the Senate, than he received a dispatch from Walter Rawson asking him to come to Philadelphia, where he would meet him that evening. Despite his extreme fatigue, consequent upon the lifting of the heavy anxiety under which he had been living

for three months, Cotton Mather did not hesitate a moment about complying. He glanced at a time-table, and found that by rapid driving he could catch an express train for Philadelphia.

Four hours later, he walked into that great half way house between New York and Washington, the Continental Hotel, at Philadelphia, and cleverly avoiding any mention of his name, was shown to Walter Rawson's room. His nephew's first words were:

"So the bill is really through. That's better than I expected. Now, it must become a law."

"But, I don't care whether it receives final sanction or is vetoed," shouted Mather, sitting down. "It has served my purpose already. I've caught my game."

"But it will be worth fifty million dollars—that charter and its franchises."

"Perhaps, but——"

"Why, sir, it gives us control of the greatest river in the world. We shall make this enterprise the monument of our lives," continued Walter, with more impetuosity than the elder man had ever seen him manifest.

"Yes, but I want to make it the grave of two hundred members of Congress. 'Monument' is all very well; but I want it to cover their political carcasses".

"You must give that idea up. The reward is better than the revenge."

"It 's asking too much to expect me to give up my revenge," resumed Cotton Mather, musing. "I can't."

"Why, man, enjoy it another way."

"How's that?"

"Wait till the bill is signed, then repudiate all your contracts with the Congressmen; get new certificates printed differing from the present ones in shape and color, and then declare all the old issue worthless—because given without valuable consideration."

"But they may be transferred to third parties, and we should have to meet their owners in court."

"Not if you act promptly. If you give the present possessors to understand that every holder is of record, they will burn the certificates, every man of them. They haven't forgotten Oakes Ames's memorandum-book. Then we, and a few friends, own the whole concern."

"But I don't see how my enemies will suffer."

"Then you haven't learned as much about humanity as I thought you had. The loss of the prospective fortune which each man has already drawn against, mentally at least, in a thousand ways, will destroy these people's peace of mind for the rest of their lives. It will be the cruelest of punishments, worse even than to give them the money and debauch their good names. O, Cotton Mather! you and your ichneumons have overlooked a very simple fact."

"Then it becomes a matter of money, and I can get very little gratification out of more money at my age."

"But you can strike the political hangers-on a deadly blow. Before you promulgate the repudiation scheme,

you can sell these people five or six millions of the company's bonds—your share, for instance. We shall control the stock, and so manage the company."

The elder man deliberated in silence for several moments before he said:

"Very well; it's agreed."

And after a hurried supper, served in Walter's room, Cotton Mather was driven back to the West Philadelphia station, that he might return to Washington on the midnight train.

To the credit of everybody be it said, the bill was signed the following morning before Mather was out of bed, and the vengeful merchant was apprised of the fact by the good member from John Brown's Tract, who came in the blandest way to offer his congratulations. He did not leave, however, until the beneficent patron of civilization had given him one of the company's pretty certificates. The recipient had some qualms of conscience, but reconciled them with the thought that he had not been paid until after the work was done.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW A KING TRAVELS.

ABOUT Walter Rawson hovered a flock of bright-faced, well-dressed men, some young, others old. They sought ideas, inspiration, courage. They were men of "the bright afterthought," who bought at the wrong time and never knew when to sell. The French have a neat expression for the idea that occurs to us as we are descending the stairs when the opportunity to utilize it has passed away never to return. They call it *l'esprit d'escalier*.

Rawson's friends only needed to know, or to divine, what he was doing in the stock market to be inspired by brilliant ideas of their own. But as nobody ever learned what "the magician," as he was often called, had decided to do until he was ready to let them into the secret, the information was not nearly so valuable as generally imagined. He diverted attention from his actual purposes, in many instances, by cultivating pleasant and intimate relations among the members of the new social estate. By a few short trips to Saratoga, Washington or Long Branch, as the season served, and the social dinner-parties that he gave to the nabobs, alleged heroes, and greedy politicians, he created the impression that he was keeping out of the market.

Thus was he enabled to prepare for a move in prices up or down.

Unsuspected by anybody, Rawson had been buying the stock of the New York and San Francisco Railroad for months in the interest of the Blind Pool. Its market value had been kept in the neighborhood of 20 by judiciously circulated reports of Indian depredations and by transferring the bulk of all imperishable freight gathered on the Pacific coast to the Juan Fernandez Steamship Company. When Rawson owned fully half of the New York and San Francisco shares, he generously confided the secret to a small circle of these friends; and they bought liberally on an ascending scale up to 75—not a little of the stock, it is sad to say, being supplied by Rawson himself through discreet brokers. He readily had himself chosen president of the gigantic corporation. Thoroughly reorganizing its executive branches, he reduced its expenses, sent the through freights eastward by the railway instead of by the steamships, quadrupled the earnings during the first quarter, and gave promise of a six per cent. dividend for the year. Nothing like the energy he infused into the management had ever been seen. With the stroke of a pen he entered into a pooling arrangement with his trunk lines in the East, and gave through bills of lading from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Then was he president of the greatest railway system in the world.

The railroad king, purely of American growth, leads

a life combining business and pleasure so intimately that the dividing line has only a hypothetical existence. There is so much variety in his labors, so many pleasant episodes in his journeys, that a few days of actual office drudgery, just before each annual meeting, becomes a diversion.

It was not always so. In former times the railway president passed most of his days in a dingy office, or looking to the details of purely executive work, and often knew the vast properties which he administered merely by their positions on the map. He of to-day, on the contrary, has his principal office on wheels—a private car that combines drawing-room, office, dining and bedrooms and kitchen. In it, at an hour's notice, he leaves for the most distant of his possessions. A special time schedule, an engine, and the courteous freedom of all the rails intervening between the place of departure and his system of roads awaits him. In constant possession of this sumptuous abode are his butler, his cook and his porters. The wine-closet is always full, and the dust-proof lockers carry linen of the whitest kind. The drawing-room is usually at the rear end of the car, with an enclosed veranda for a critical study of the roadway. There are to be found the softest of movable chairs. Electric bells give instant communication with the butler's pantry, and a touch supplies a glass of water or a cigar. When the labors of the day are past, the president retires, not to the close and stuffy seclusion of a berth, but to a veritable four-poster bed. The rivalry of the times has

developed every possibility of comfort, even to a bath-tub and hot water. But strangest of all is the over-shadowing influence which the great money center of America exerts over the daily and hourly life of this luxurious traveler. However insignificant the station at which clicks a telegraph instrument, it represents direct communication with Wall Street—thither do all lines of railway and of wire lead to-day.

Soon after his election to the presidency of the New York and San Francisco Railway, Walter Rawson ordered a private car built, and, as soon as it was completed, started on his tour of inspection. He took with him a small party of friends, his secretary, and an expert telegraph operator. The guests assembled at the Jersey City depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad, at nine o'clock in the morning, where they found the coach awaiting them. Theirs was to be a special train, of two palace cars, and was to precede the Chicago express.

Rawson arrived late, but the instant he stepped on board the bell rang, and away the engine dashed. The chase toward the western horizon began. He had invited Jack Burnaby to accompany him, in the hope of regaining his good will, but that gentleman had declined to go.

If any one in that party had doubted that Wall Street is the financial center of this nation, the few days' experience that followed convinced him of his error. In an hour the Stock Exchange would begin business, but arrangements had already been made to

have the opening quotations forwarded to the Philadelphia station, where they would be put on board.

With a clear track, the Quaker City was reached in an hour and a half, and as soon as the messages had been received the westward course was resumed. The engineer who handles such freight knows what is expected of him. The cars, on their forty-inch *papier maché* wheels, rode as smoothly as a landeau over the roads of Central Park.

Orders were to stop only on signal. A red flag at Mount Joy slowed the train enough for a bundle of messages to be tossed into an open car window. They were in the hands of the persons to whom they were directed, and answers were soon prepared. Quotations up to noon of all the leading stocks were also read. In the dingy station at Middletown sat a telegraph operator, and the speed was checked sufficient to pass the order to him: "Tell Harrisburg to get New York at once and hold it." As the journey continues, listen to the rattle of words: "Lackawanna 131," shouts a believer in the coal stocks; "Lake Shore 120," rejoins a favorite of the trunk lines. "What's Erie to-day?" asks the first traveler. "Forty-two and a quarter," is the answer. "Sorry I didn't sell my St. Paul yesterday," self-communes a third. "What's it now?" asks his neighbor. "Down a dollar, to 91." "How much have you got?" "Only a thousand." "I'll tak it all at 91." "You can have it at a quarter better." "All right, quarter it is. I'll get par before we reach home."

Meanwhile, Walter Rawson had slipped away to his bedroom, where he was disposing of his telegrams with the aid of his secretary.

"Boxwood of London wants capsicum," he read aloud in a message from the acting president of his railroad system in New York. "That's too many—can't spare ten thousand shares. Say this in reply: 'Sell Boxwood seven thousand'—I mean 'antidote'—get the code word right."

Several other personal dispatches prepared, he returned to the social hall at the end of the car, remarking, "New York and San Francisco, 93." The look of contentment that went round the faces of the members of the party (several of whom had been let into the secret by Rawson as low as 60 to 65) was enough to satisfy anybody that "life is worth living." Harrisburg is reached, the telegrams are filed, several others received, and, as the train pulls out of the gloomy station, luncheon is announced.

It is one o'clock, New York time—two hours till the Exchange closes. The train has been doing fifty miles an hour.

Over oysters on the half-shell, boned turkey and salads, served with champagne and apollinaris, the outlook of the day's money market is gone over again. The sky then clouds up, and, for a time, the densely wooded hills beyond the Susquehanna pass like a canvas by Corot—the heavy atmosphere deepening and enriching the greens and browns. Then the conversation lapses into trout-fishing, and the Isaak Walton of

the happy family indulges in a disquisition on a fish of great local fame taken among the mountain streams of the Alleghanies—"the Spot." Rawson calls the butler, gives an order to have a dispatch sent ahead to Altoona to have a box of "spots" ready to come aboard the train at four o'clock. This message is dropped at the next signal station, and the order is executed. Nothing is any trouble to the man who knows how to go about what he wants to do. Pittsburg at seven; more than half way to Chicago, and a gain of an hour on the Limited Express.

Dinner served, after which coffee and cigars.

"Cyclops closed very strong. It will go two points higher to-morrow," is thrown out as a feeler by an Exchange Place operator.

"No sweetmeats after dessert, if you please," retorts a favorite of the Southwesterns, seated at the card table near by.

"Will you sell any at the closing figure?" was the bantering inquiry.

"I don't mind letting you have a thousand," rejoins the seller, "making good his blind," and asking for two cards.

"Done."

"Very well."

And the player, who never wrote an I O U, drops out of the game long enough to scribble and exchange the memorandum of sale and purchase, after which he makes a minute in his book, so that he shall not forget to direct his broker to borrow a thousand

Cyclops on the following day, and hand them over at delivery hour to his friend's agent in New York. It is all done, a transaction involving over ninety thousand dollars in less than five minutes, and the player is ready for the next deal of the cards. To anticipate: this venturesome youth covered this "short" sale from Omaha, two days later, at a profit of four thousand dollars.

One after another the members of the party seek their beds. Daylight overtakes the train at the Indiana state-line. Breakfast, with "spots" as the cook's *piéce de résistance*, after leaving Fort Wayne.

Fifty miles out of Chicago, the train is "flagged" at a straggling hamlet, and when the speed has been sufficiently checked, a young man (who had previously made his peace with the station-master) springs lightly on the front platform, as he shouts to the engineer: "All right; I 'm aboard."

This young man enters the drawing-room, rings the electric bell for a waiter, and sends his card to Mr. Rawson. Then he looks out. The train is "doing about forty to the hour," he thinks. The railway king sends word for the visitor to join him on the rear platform, where he is enjoying his after-breakfast cigar.

"Mr. Yeastcake, of the Chicago *Times*, I believe," said Rawson, courteously, glancing again at the name on the card.

"Yes, sir; and I hope you will pardon the unceremonious nature of my visit, but, really, your engineer

acted as if he hadn't time enough to wait until I sent my compliments on board, or your invitation was returned."

"Quite true. You are welcome; what can I say to you?"

"I want to hear you talk about the financial prospects of the country," and the reporter seated himself to listen.

The real interviewer never takes any notes; it is only the novice, or his impersonator on the stage, who draws a book and pencil on his victim.

"Had you asked me about the comet, or art, or—religion, I should have had to refer you to somebody else; but if you want any information about railroads, I can, perhaps, be of some service."

"Railroads let it be, then. What, for instance, are railroads?"

"They are commercial enterprises, built to earn money."

"No sentiment about you, Mr. Rawson. Thoroughly practical, I see. You do not believe in running trains merely for the public convenience?"

"What does the 'public,' as you call the people, care for the railroads, further than to get as much out of them for as small a consideration as possible? It is all stuff about working for 'the public good.' That sentiment has bankrupted many a great corporation."

"You are certainly frank, Mr. Rawson. This information will surprise many quiet folks of ancient and humanitarian ideas."

"It may make tart reading; but that's what you want, I suppose."

"Very true; but what will the people say? Are they to be kicked, like mules?"

"Oh, ho! You don't appear to care any more for them than I do," suggested Rawson, laughing heartily.

"But they will read what you say."

"Suppose they do?"

"May they not act, impatiently and abruptly, some day?"

"That's the one peril that threatens the stability of this nation," answered Rawson. "The injudicious interference of Congresses and state legislatures will precipitate, some day, one of the most terrible panics the commercial world has ever known. Legislation was responsible for the crash in 1873. Nothing is so easily frightened as capital. Politicians are rarely capitalists —that is," said Rawson, naively, "not at the beginning of their careers. Somehow, most of them overcome poverty; but few ever cease to be demagogues."

"But these men are not the people."

"Perhaps not; but they do their talking, and make and unmake the laws for them."

"Are you not unwise in saying this? You may have a conflict with these legislators sooner or later, in which these words will be cited against you."

"Afraid! No; bless your soul! The man who controls a system of railways traversing seventeen states and six territories cannot say anything that will conciliate everybody. Nor can he readily increase

the number of his enemies. Whatever he might say that would be popular in the West would displease the East, and, likely enough, throw the Southern people into a rage."

"But surely legislators are necessary?" suggested Yeastcake, still clinging to the traditions of what is sarcastically called "social science" that he had imbibed at college.

"If we regard the state as a corporation, yes. But would the stockholders of any commercial enterprise choose for its directors—as the administrators of their fortunes—men who were not financially interested with them? Would the share owners of the New York and San Francisco Company select any dozen men from your state legislature as its board of directors? I think not."

"Suppose we look at the other side, then."

"Well, if the state is not a corporation it becomes merely a social club. The constitution, you say? Every target company has a constitution. Why, half our legislators, state and national, have never bothered themselves to read it. If the state is a club, it is a political club. At most it needs only a governor and his cabinet. Now, I don't say this as a railroad man, but as a citizen—for legislatures are quite as useful to us, sometimes, as they are obnoxious at others. But I can't see that they do the people any good—and that is the implied premise we started with. I know their value as well as anybody," said Rawson, and he added, "I might say, their price."

The train came to a stop at Chicago, and the railway king went inside the car to change his shirt. The newspaper man, in a dazed condition started on his way to the *Times* office to write up his report.

Disconnected and unsatisfactory as the interview had been—general conversation is nearly always discursive and illogical—it contained the cardinal principle in the Rawson philosophy. The reporter seized on that idea, and the doctrines in that interview became, in the course of a very few months, a national issue under the form of a struggle in the United States Senate and the Empire State for a more euphonic variation of the principle called "Senatorial Courtesy," or "The Congressional Rule."

The special train bearing Walter Rawson, the radical, sped westward after half an hour's delay. Now the king was on his own rails.

Dispatches received at Chicago announced a continuance of the advance in stocks. Everything except Cyclops was rushing headlong toward higher prices.

At a small telegraph station, forty miles southwest of Chicago, the train was run on a siding, and Rawson, with his own operator, took possession of the wires. Within five minutes he was in direct communication with his own office in New York. The circuit went round by St. Louis, Cincinnati, Buffalo, and Albany; but the operator knew the answer to his call, and said, laconically: "I've got him." A batch of seemingly unintelligible orders were sent, reading, "Sell a thou-

sand Bouncer; cover five thousand Zulu under beeswax." "Take all that Hawkins has to sell, and advise Boxwood that he can have the 'arsenic' he wanted yesterday. Bought them in Chicago of Dobell; send to his office for statement"—and much more of the same kind. Then dispatches began to arrive for members of the party, more quotations, requests for direction. A drop of three points was announced in Lackawanna—the very stock that Rawson had "sold" a thousand of (under the code word "Bouncer") at the top figures a few minutes before. A bank director in the party was asked by wire regarding the "paper" of a certain merchant which his board would in two hours be asked to discount to a large amount.

There was no apparent difficulty in sending a dispatch from any part of the country to the members of the flying train. Its course, and approximate location, was known to every telegraph operator, and, indeed, to every reader of the newspapers in the United States—and who is there that doesn't read the newspapers to-day?

Forward again, faster than ever. A clear track now —"by order of Walter Rawson."

Dinner was served as the Mississippi was sighted—in courses and smoking hot. Soup, fish, roast—from "the little lambs" of Iowa—éntrees, sweets, cheese, fruits, nuts and coffee. Even the bread was baked on board—the wheat may have been ground, for all one knows. Claret, champagne, and seltzer—each with its course. Then cigars, cards, and—bed.

When a waiter again presented himself at the state-room door, in answer to the summons of the electric bell, and with the traditional morning cup of black coffee, he was asked :

"Where are we now ?"

"At Omaha, sir."

. . . . . .

A fortnight is a good while ; but such was the history of every day of the time, until the members of the party re-embarked on the ferryboat at Jersey City, that was to bear them across the Hudson, to the commercial maelstrom whose vortex is the Stock Exchange. It seemed hardly possible that they had dined within the same week at the Cliff House, on the Pacific's shore below San Francisco.

The "inspection" cost $25,000, but Rawson marked all the bills "O K," and the several companies of which he was the head paid them.

Although Rawson was the last to learn the fact, Belwar had returned from abroad, and opened an office in Mew street. The capital was supplied by a wealthy aunt, who obligingly died and made the scapegrace her sole heir. He knew nothing about the details of the brokerage business ; but as a seat in the Exchange cost only $20,000, and clerks and stock-indicators could be hired, he saw no obstacle to success. This was his last folly.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A GIANT OF TO-DAY.

No time was lost in launching the monstrous National Improvement Company on its career of usefulness and prosperity. Its offices in New York were the most sumptuous ever seen. The still-remembered splendor of the Cyclops building was far outshone by that of the giant corporation directed by Cotton Mather, the now notorious financier and only commercial rival of Walter Rawson.

The books for the subscriptions to five millions of bonds were only open fifteen minutes, and there was so much dissatisfaction evinced because all the persons in line could not be accommodated, that "privileges" were given to them for the next allotment, to be made a month later. During the interval, it may be incidentally mentioned, these "preferences," or "privileges" of early subscription, sold at fabulous prices, a syndicate of brokers representing several large capitalists paying $10,000 for the privilege of being first in line when the books were re-opened.

Everybody was clearly in earnest. Work on the mighty undertaking began at once. A depot of supplies was established at Cairo, Ill.; twenty great rafts were built, upon which small villages of cabins for the

workmen were constructed. Thoroughly equipped surveying parties were dispatched for the scene of operations within a week. A dozen steamers were bought at New York and Philadelphia for the company's use, and sent 'round by sea to New Orleans.

Along the great river's course sites were selected for future centers of commerce.

Five thousand laborers, recruited from the ranks of the disaffected working classes of all the large cities and the mining districts, were shipped to the Mississippi valley by special trains, and ten canals were under way before the end of six weeks.

"There is not a ledge of rock below Cairo; the whole Mississippi valley is of drift formation,"—geological fact. The work of excavation was not difficult. All the latest appliances known to engineering were called into service. Every steam excavating apparatus in the country was purchased. Shovels and picks were bought by the thousand. An ingenious inventor, familiar with every branch of science, was summoned, and excavated a half mile of canal in a week by the use of a steam drill and dynamite.

He had calculated the depression of the crater left after an explosion so accurately that he could tell to an inch the depth of water in the "cut off" after the river was turned into it. He put the steam drills to work in the soft clay, sunk the holes 200 feet deep and 80 feet apart along the line which the bottom of the canal was to take. Then they were heavily charged with dynamite, connected in a circuit by electricity, and

a half-mile strip of earth was blown skyward—"out of the track of civilization," as somebody said, in commenting on the achievement. Several men were killed, but that mischance was forgotten in the splendor of success.

Railways were constructed along the canals as the work progressed, and all the earth excavated mechanically was carried to the up-stream end of each cut-off and dumped upon the top of an arched magazine filled with the most terrible explosives. Just as soon as each section was completed the bulkheads were rended apart, and the huge mass of earth covering the hidden magazine was hurled into the main channel of the river, diverting its course into the new one. A fleet of barges, loaded with stone, was then floated down-stream and sunk against the *debris*, thus so effectually damming the river that it never hesitated for an hour about taking up its new route to the gulf. The idea was at once brilliant and simple of execution; and, although envious engineers shook their heads, the great work went rapidly forward.

More men were constantly drawn from the centers of labor. The climate was exceedingly unhealthy—fevers of a dozen different types prevailed, and there was a neat graveyard by the side of each section of the canal.

One year after the company was granted the franchise, it was furnishing employment to twenty-five thousand men. It had dug one hundred miles of canal. It had straightened twenty-three of the worst crooks in the mighty river. It *had* reduced the distance from

St. Louis to New Orleans three hundred miles. The advantages for the down-stream passage were already apparent. But every dollar's decrease in South-bound freight rates added three to the North-bound tariff. The strongest steamboats on the river found it well-nigh impossible to stem the swift current. The flood of waters rushed through the new shutes as down a mill-race. The more easy and rapid the passage to New Orleans, the more evident did it appear that there would come a time when the steamboats could not get back.

Curiously, Walter Rawson had foreseen this, and with the apparent purpose of anticipating his supposed rival, already controlled the two trunk lines of railway that had been built along the Mississippi's banks. These roads now carried the cotton and the rice of the South to the Northern markets. It was clear that all Northern bound traffic must very soon be driven from the river to the railroads.

An off-shoot of the gigantic parent corporation of Cotton Mather, called "The Cairo Construction Company," began to build immense barges which were intended only to carry freight down the river. These huge rafts were of capacity sufficient to carry one hundred thousand bushels of wheat or corn each, and a strong tug-boat could take a fleet of them through from St. Louis to New Orleans in four days. That certainly was a revoluion in the carrying trade that affected every railroad interest in the United States. It set the managers of these gigantic monopolies to thinking as no

other event in the history of commercial intercommunication ever had.

In course of time, the now bold directors of the Mississippi Company, as it was popularly called, through their agents and engineers, began to lay an embargo on every city and town along the lower river, so situated that it could be left high and dry inland by the construction of a cut-off.

This raised a tremendous outcry, the echo of which was heard in Washington; but the Mississippi Company was greater than Congress. It took no notice whatever of the memorials and protests from the state legislatures, and its officers only sneered at the threats of the state executives to call out the militia. "The tide of civilization" now created as much consternation among the inhabitants of the Mississippi valley as the periodical uprising of the river's waters had previously done.

Walter Rawson in New York watched the course of events with amazement. He felt that he had always been bold; but he realized that his schemes had been only child's play compared with this one of Cotton Mather. This old man had become a financial Frankenstein, and he saw that the formerly pliable merchant was no longer his coadjutor but his master.

Before the agitation had died out in the South a like excitement was spreading down the stream from St. Paul. The Upper Mississippi was much lower than it ever had been in the dryest seasons. The rocky ledge at Keokuk was entirely bare of water, and the rapids at Davenport were unnavigable. The steamboat interests

of the upper river had not time to organize for resistance before Rawson had removed all grounds for complaint on the part of the grain-growers, miners, producers and shippers by lowering railroad freight rates beneath those of river transportation. "Safety, speed and quick profits" was his cry, and those who joined in it shouted so much louder than the steamboat men that public opinion was befogged. Steamboat traffic on the Upper Mississippi was declared to be an absurdity—even by the stockholders of the Mississippi Improvement Company who lived along its shores. What was the use of the boats? A line of railway followed each river bank from St. Paul to the mouth of the Missouri.

Down the river at the base of operations the call was still going abroad for more men; just as everywhere in the North arose the demand for more stock certificates. When white and colored laborers could not be obtained Chinese workmen were introduced; and although they brought with them their filthy habits and their more horrible diseases, they were found tractable and valuable. They were imported by the shipload and brought from San Francisco to the seat of operations by special through trains.

Despite Cotton Mather's tireless energy and the stupendous progress that was making, there were many dissatisfied people in the nation. Some of the Congressmen were impatient for their first cash dividend —as yet they had only the elaborately engraved certificate of stock. A few brokers who had not been em-

ployed in floating the bonds and stock were doing all in their power to depreciate the property, refusing to recognize any present or prospective value in the enterprise.

Cotton Mather was kept thoroughly informed of the changing sentiment toward him among his Senatorial and Congressional friends. Still, no one could have imagined from his conduct that he suspected anything of the kind. He was moving from point to point along the river where the vast improvements were in progress. He was, beyond question, the inspiring genius of the enterprise—a work in comparison to which the Suez Canal was mere play. Though he knew nothing of the practical engineering difficulties to be overcome, he cared not what they were; he believed in the omnipotent power of money. The damages to navigation were of no moment to him. The same potent element that had shut the eyes of Congressmen would silence the mutterings of complaint.

Until the vengeance was complete, he must go ahead.

The one feature that particularly pleased him was the respect shown him by the vast army of laborers employed in his yawning ditches. He went among them freely. This intimacy recalled the days in which he, too, had been a homeless wanderer, forced to labor for his bread. Societies were formed, each with its fund in aid of the sick and injured or for the benefit of the families of the dead. These movements were encouraged by the President of the National Improvement Company in substantial ways. He headed all the sub-

scriptions with a round sum. It wasn't that he cared anything for mankind; but his purpose was to make the world believe that he cared nothing for money.

With the advent of the Chinese new complications arose. They had all been imported after the signing of a bond and agreement, according to which the company guaranteed to send their bodies back to the Flowery Kingdom in case of death. Some of the miserable Celestials were so wretchedly unhappy and discontented that, despairing of ever being able to return alive, they calmly secreted themselves over a mined mound, in order that they might be buried in their native land after the next explosion.

The introduction of the Chinese produced considerable social bitterness. The whites and negroes had, after some disagreements, accepted the inevitable. The division superintendents had instituted a rivalry between the two races. Equal amounts of work were assigned to gangs of blacks and whites, and reports of the work were placarded at the headquarters of each division. But the Chinese could not be spurred by rivalry; they were tireless and faithful, but toiled without enthusiasm on a canal which was to ensure the prosperity of a land in which they could not feel any possible interest. Occasionally they were attacked by the other races, and not unfrequently a Mongolian got his queue cut off by a vengeful Caucasian. A case of hari-kari was the invariable sequel.

Another strange circumstance attendant upon the work was the appearance of a new and alarming mal-

ady. Digging in the damp alluvial soil of the Mississippi bottom-land appeared to engender it. In its early stages the disease resembled ague, was attended with chills and fever; but not yielding to the usual treatment, was soon followed by paralytic symptoms. These were succeeded by a slow but ceaseless withering away of the body. One limb after another was attacked, until, after months of agony, the patient died of exhaustion. Strange to say, the power of locomotion was generally the last to fail. The hands were, as a rule, first affected; the fingers lost power to hold anything; then the palsy extended to the arm.

This disease struck terror into the hearts of the white and the negro laborers. Only the clever tactics of the engineers prevented a stampede. Having played the Black against the White, these officers now checked the disaffection by bringing the Yellow forward as the living embodiment of calmness and perseverance. Forgetting that the Mongolian was far from looking at life as a philosopher when his queue was gone, the directing geniuses of the National Improvement Company now pointed to the Chinaman's stolid faith in Providence, just as if he worshiped the same God as the acclimated races.

The Mongolians certainly did not make any ado about the malady. They went to bed at night with their opium pipes as usual. When one of their number was taken with the disease the others isolated him. After leaving by his side some rice, water, bread, a small joss, and a very sharp knife, they gave him no

further thought. The unfortunate rarely allowed himself to survive his store of provisions. The Chinese called the malady "fung che;" but, as none of them spoke even pigeon English, explanations were impossible.

This distressing subject had not received any special consideration from Cotton Mather, until one night in his room at the dismal little Cairo hotel a peculiar incident occurred.

The day had been raw and cold for the season, and he had ordered a fire in the stove. He assumed it had been built. He picked up a stick of wood to add to the fuel, but in stooping to reach the stove-door, he fell forward, and only saved his face from contact with the iron surface by putting out his right hand. The broad palm appeared to stick to the metal. Naturally, he supposed he had badly burned his hand, but he felt no pain. He examined his palm and his fingers, but saw no sign of blisters.

The mystery of this incident grew on him. An unaccountable fear seized him. He passed an uneasy night. Morning found him so distressed in mind that he sought the chief physician of the company, ex-Surgeon General Prentiss, and related the occurrence as having happened to one of the department bosses. His statements were inaccurate, because his major premise was incorrect. He started with the assumption that the stove was hot, whereas, in fact, it was cold. Then he said, carelessly:

"A paralysis of the nerves of the hand, I presume?"

"Possibly," replied the physician, cautiously; "but in the locality you mention such symptoms may be far more serious."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and I fear from what you tell me that there is no help for your man——"

"But, you oughtn't to tell—him this? It is terrible."

"Why, no; of course I wouldn't tell him what I fear; and you will be particularly careful, I trust, not even to hint at my worst suspicions. But I recognize the marked symptoms of the dreadful disease which has sprung from the mould and dampness of the Arkansas river section. It appears to be contagious. Contact with the clothing of an infected person suffices. Still, I don't know what to advise. As a gang-boss, of course he mixed with the men freely?"

"Yes."

"Shook them by the hand, perhaps?"

"Often—even wore their clothing, on one occasion," said Cotton Mather. Then, recollecting himself, he stammered: "That is, I believe he wore another man's coat one day, when he had to make an exploration in a tunnel heading that was very damp."

"Then it's all up with him. He has the 'mah-fung.'"

"The what?" exclaimed Cotton Mather, turning ghastly pale.

"The 'mah-fung,' another type of the 'fung-che.' More slow in its progress, but not less fatal."

"Look here, Prentiss; you know very well I don't understand Latin," said the capitalist, savagely.

"That 's Chinese. It 's terrible enough in that language."

"Well, what is it in English?"

"Leprosy."

"Oh! God!" He turned ashen.

"Don't let me frighten you, Mr. Mather——"

"But, surely, it can be cured?"

"No; it is incurable. The best medical talent of Paris is now investigating its nature; but so far, I believe, without successful result."

"How long has that man to live if he has such a horrible disease?"

"With this slow type he may last four or five years."

"That 'll do, Prentiss. I take a peculiar interest in the man, and he shall be saved if money can do it. I 'll go to him at once."

The learned physician, whose acquaintance the reader formed at "The Willows" some time ago, bade good-night to the life-long scoffer at physic.

Cotton Mather was panic-stricken. Age had told upon him, and he was no longer the master of his will at times. He forgot the great Mississippi improvement for ever.

Gathering up about twenty thousand dollars in bills that remained in his safe at Cairo, he boarded a night boat down the river. Carefully shaving off his splendid beard in his stateroom, he went ashore at Memphis and took the first train for New York, traveling in the

seclusion of a drawing-room section. Thence he took passage the same day in the steerage of a vessel bound direct for Bordeaux, every comfort being sacrificed to the preservation of his disguise.

Fourteen days of indescribable misery of mind and body brought him to the harbor. Before entering the small boat to reach the shore he carried his bedding to the deck and dropped it into the sea.

Having only one idea in his head, namely, the procurement of the best medical care in the world, this wretched old man left on the night train for Paris, and was set down at the Orleans depot about daylight.

He entered a small café near by, where he breakfasted on whatever the waiters, in their goodness, brought him, for he couldn't speak or understand a single word of the language. Then, with a map in his hand, he started for the great hospital of Saint Louis, the merits of which he had found set forth in his guide-book. Reaching it at last on foot—for he couldn't get a cab-driver to comprehend whither he wanted to go—he was admitted as a private patient after considerable parley, he agreeing to pay five hundred francs per month and the expense of a special attendant.

He shortened his name again. He was addressed as "Monsieur Cotton."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE JUNIPER AGE.

In the splendor of its appointments and interior decoration, no gentleman's club in America could rival the Juniper. It's site commanded one of the most costly corners of the Fifth Avenue. Members of the best society passed its windows in daily dress parade. Many marriageable and ambitious young women made this afternoon pilgrimage of the Avenue in cunningly shaped phaetons of Parisian design; or, if the snow favored, in low, fantastic sleighs, straight from St. Petersburg, hoping for approving smiles from the Juniper Club. At its windows, every afternoon, sat the young married men and bachelors of New York as self-commissioned, but recognized, critics of this passing show. In the best society, a Juniper Club verdict was one from which there was no appeal.

There had been a time, within the memory of man, when another social cabal fixed the status of all debutants. That was in the ascendancy of the Chiliad Club —a solemn organization, that had already secured a start of half a century on its thousand years of prospective existence. It should have been called the Millenium Club, for its dotards believed that they controlled the American Satan. Its traditions were as

antique as its furniture; sperm candles were its affectation and delight. It repudiated the present. Its membership was restricted to ten hundred, just as its charter was limited to a thousand years. The Chiliad was the most exclusive club in the world. A candidate for its mysteries had to be "posted" more than a generation before his name was reached, and then a single adverse ballot dashed the aspirant's hopes forever. To a Frenchman, the Academy was far more accessible, for, though the membership of the Chiliad was a thousand instead of forty, the Chiliasts appeared to be "immortals," indeed, for they never died and never allowed their membership to lapse. This old club was rich beyond all earthly necessity. It regularly invested its annual surplus in a plot of ground further and further north of the Harlem. It already had a chain of outposts extending to West Farms. It wanted to be sure of an eligible site for its club-house four or five hundred years hence. It was slow, mysterious, powerful, but narrow and domineering to the rest of this small world.

Of late years it had lost popularity. The Chiliad was still satisfied with itself; but everybody outside its roll had forgotten it since the transcendent rise of the young Juniper Club. The Chiliasts, as their name indicated, believed in a millenium of their own. They had Satan with them, it was admitted, but they restrained him by closely welded fetters called by-laws and house rules. The Juniperians lived neither in the past nor future. They were men of to-day. Their

doors swung a welcome to every guest properly introduced. Satan was there, also, but they gave him rein. He was loosed. The Juniperians delighted to see him skip about. He was sociable when one understood him and so long as he was respectfully treated. He was one of them. They felt sure of keeping him, for he got his one soul every year.

The Chiliad was patriarchal, austere; the Juniper was juvenal in the precious Shakespeare sense of "youthful."

The Juniper Club was abreast of the age its members so largely aided in creating. It was thoroughly American, did not ape any foreign social clubs. Gas was not bright enough for the eyes of its members; the electric light glowed in every room throughout the building. A private telephone system connected it with every part of the city. It maintained a cab company of its own. Its letters and its mail were forwarded to and transmitted from the post-office, three miles distant, by a pneumatic tube. Private lines of telegraph connected it with every broker's office and with all social centers in America. There was no delay at the Juniper Club.

In some respects its tastes were fastidious. All games of cards were played in kid gloves; but, anomalous as it may appear, each man at the table was required to remove his coat and roll up his shirt sleeves before he sat down. Attached to every table was a valet in full livery, who shuffled and dealt that no time might be lost. A pack of cards was never dealt twice. The club had a card factory of its own. Each new

hand at poker meant another "deck." The colors and designs on the backs of each pile were strikingly dissimilar, and after each hand was played a second valet, in full club livery of juniper blue, turned the pretty pasteboards face downward, and compared their backs to see that all were of the same family. Nobody touched any cards except those given him to play. It was a frank and manly recognition of the fact that no one wished to suspect another of trickery and fraud. If, after these precautions, deception were detected, the directors never interfered, and it was regarded as exceedingly discourteous to mention the circumstance or to leave the game. The club did its whole duty. It placed each member who played on an equal footing; after that he must take care of himself.

The heinous and unpardonable offense in the Juniper Club was to be close with one's money. It was a rare event for a member to be expelled on that charge, because a sordid man could never pass the costly ordeal of initiation. The entrance fee was $10,000 and the annual dues $1,000. Every new member was expected, also, to give a supper to the twelve directors, at an average cost of $100 a plate.

At the Juniper Club it required three hours to serve the simplest dinner. This was not owing to any imperfections in the service, but because of the endless number of courses, the plenteousness of the wine and the vast amount of talking that had to be done. Its *table d'hote* dinner was the greatest in the world, and cost $10, exclusive of wine. Whenever a member was de-

sirous of adding to the expense, he was instructed to throw the cut-glass on the floor after each wine course. The club had its own brand of champagne, and had recently closed a contract with the monks of Chartreuse for the entire stock in their cloister vaults. That famous after-dinner *liqueur* had become the established evening drink at the Juniper Club, and a royally talkative throng it made of those who sat up with it long.

The club's most charming feature was a hanging garden covering its roof, where its members delighted to sit in pleasant weather under a canopy of silk, to smoke, drink and extol the jolly Juniper age in which they lived. Some of these informal gatherings amid the rhododendrons, palms and orange trees that waved in the breeze at that lofty height were remarkably brilliant in many ways. Bright, genial, *successful* young men, with brains as well as millions, assembled there, and many clever words were coined and stories milled.

At one corner of this beautiful place, screened from all intrusion by a double line of fragrant, blooming orchis, sat a small group of men on one of the prettiest autumn nights the moon ever shone on. Every member of the party could draw his check for a million save one, and he was the guest and lion of the passing hour. He sat gracefully in a great easy chair, not directly facing the table, nor yet so far away but that he could reach a quaint *liqueur* glass of irridescent hues that alternately stood thereon or rested at his lips. He was comparatively poor, though he probably had handled more money than anybody in his presence. But

he had seen the world, loved wine and good company, and never distrusted anybody. He rarely smoked in public, because it could not be done gracefully.

The party was drinking chartreuse and brandy and discussing a first-night performance from which they had returned within an hour. It was the opening play of the new season. Opinion differed very much regarding the author's merits, the stage-mounting of the piece, and the comprehension of the actors. When they had exhausted the subject of the night, a shrewd young banker turned impulsively to Tom Ray, for it was he who filled the post of guest, and said :

"Pledge us, old boy."

"A sentiment ?"

"Certainly."

"But how ? When we cannot agree on so commonplace a matter as a play, shall we hope for success in a toast ?"

"We insist," shouted several voices.

Tom Ray gazed rapturously toward the cut-glass decanter in the center of the table, through which the moonlight passed to emerge emerald-hued. Then he lifted the sparkling green globule, refilled to the brim, and said :

"On an evening very much like this, though in winter, I sat under the pagoda on the high terrace in front of the casino at Monte Carlo, overlooking the sea. A young Englishman was at the other side of the little table that held our cigarettes and a flagon of this divine liquor. For days I had been slowly surrendering to

ennui, and to my companion, though hardly half my age, the world was already *passé*. Suddenly he raised his tiny glass, brought it devotedly to his lips, and with a depth of feeling that was really impressive, spoke thus, as nearly as I can recall:

"'Who could refuse
Green-eyed Chartreuse?
Ripened and mellow
(The *green*, not the yellow).
Use, not abuse,
Bright little fellow.
O never refuse
A kiss on the lips from
Laughing Chartreuse!'"*

Everybody was pleased. A dashing young yachtsman sang a dainty little French melody that he had learned from a peasant girl at Biarritz, another member of the party told a story with a droll climax, and all drank to the life that hurried past. Ultimately, everybody at the table was more or less heated—at least all except Tom Ray. He was cool, contented, and unflushed.

An idea occurred to a member of the party. He called a waiter, and, when he stood beside the table, turned to Tom Ray and said:

"I say, dear old fellow, invent us a new drink."

"Great idea," said another. "Make this night historical."

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* The writer has not been able to fix the authorship of these lines; but they are not his, nor did they originate with Tom Ray.

"The resources of the Juniper wine-cellars are at your service. You have only to say the word," contiued the first speaker.

"It is not easy to grant the request you make of me," replied Tom Ray. "I will think over it, and send you a receipt."

"No; now—an inspiration."

"Very well, if you insist," and Tom Ray beckoned the waiter to approach, excused himself that he might hold a brief whispered conversation with him, after which he resumed his seat. An interval of three minutes passed, at the end of which the waiter returned with a large pale-green glass bottle in a cooler and a half-dozen phials of club soda. All labels had been removed, and the curiosity grew with this attempt at mystery.

"The condition is that nobody asks any questions until every glass is drained."

"Agreed!" said all, in one voice.

The cosmopolitan poured out the limpid liquid from the flagon until it stood an inch deep in each of the six tall, fragile glasses. Then, at a signal, the attendant whisked the corks out of the soda bottles and dashed their contents, smoking with excessive coldness, into the neat spirits. The glasses sparkled, and the bubbles danced about their rims. The distribution of the potions about the small circular table was made in a moment, but before a single person had laid hold of his prize, Tom Ray said:

"Remember, I've never tasted this myself. It is

exactly what you asked for—an inspiration, an improvisation. Now !"

Every glass was drained ; but what a variety of countenances were to be seen about that table ! No two faces expressed the same verdict.

"Soap suds," said one.

"Beastly," exclaimed the next.

"Whew !" ventured another.

"Excellent," commented Tom Ray, calmly but decisively. His opinion, though given on his own decoction, was accepted as impartial and conclusive.

"What is it ?" asked one of the severest censors, more respectfully.

Tom Ray replied, solemnly : "Plain soda and the juice of the juniper berry——"

"Gin ?" all exclaimed, with a gasp. They had never tasted a common drink.

"Certainly, gin—what could be more closely associated with the name of this wonderful club ?"

"But, it 's made for varlets," stammered the banker.

"By mistaken tradition, yes," answered Tom Ray ; "but whenever the Juniper Club leads in an innovation, all New York will follow. This drink can be made the craze of the town within a week."

"But, it isn't good."

"That doesn't matter in the slightest. If the Juniper Club endorses it, it will go," rejoined Tom Ray, more good-naturedly, as the criticism grew more keen.

"What a lark," broke in the yachtsman. "I 'll

astonish every bar I strike to-morrow, by asking for this drink. But, I say old boy, christen this new internal irrigator."

"Yes, give it a name."

Tom Ray took up two bottles of soda, and, crashing them into the ice-cooler, exclaimed:

"Gin Fiz!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

FROM THE GRAVE.

WITH Cotton Mather's mysterious flight from the scene of his operations on the Mississippi, all work stopped. No better example is found in history of the supremacy of a strong mind. When he forsook it, the undertaking was promptly denounced as mad and visionary by everybody. A petition, exactly eight hundred feet long, was forwarded to Congress from the cities of the Mississippi valley, asking a grant of five millions, to repair, in part, at least, the injuries done to internal navigation.

The disappearance of President Mather was variously commented on throughout the nation. A few persons, out of charity or self-interest, declared that Cotton Mather had been murdered by some of his disaffected or dissolute laborers, and that his body filled a nameless grave "on the banks of the river he loved so well." Strong color was given to this story by Ex-Surgeon General Prentiss's testimony regarding his last interview with the missing man. Dr. Prentiss testified that Mr. Mather had declared his intention to set out on a mission of mercy among his laborers. Confirmatory evidence of another kind was found in the fact that Sheriffs' officers and vigilance committees prose-

cuted their vain search during several months. Another theory advanced was that he had gone to Europe on a secret mission, to negotiate further loans. But this was disproved by the treasurer's statement, which showed that the company had not been in need of funds.

That Cotton Mather was not in hiding in New York was settled to the satisfaction of the most skeptical. Detectives and other interested persons knew that he had for several years lived at a small hotel on Madison Square. The real grief and anxiety of Mrs. Burnaby, his adopted daughter, showed unmistakably that she knew no more than anybody else about the old merchant's fate. Her movements were "shadowed" for weeks without result. The most inquisitorial espionage over her correspondence, through the medium of a corrupted maid-servant, failed to show that she was in communication with her putative parent. The most cynical members of the police force were finally willing to admit that her sorrow was genuine, and public opinion reluctantly decided that Cotton Mather was dead.

The collapse of the National Improvement Company created a terrible flurry in every branch of commerce. So many people had slyly purchased its shares that all lines of trade were crippled.

Such consequences Walter Rawson had not been slow in foreseeing. The bitter animosity between Rawson and his deceased rival was universally known, despite a rumor always in circulation that Rawson and Mather

were related in some indefinite way. Mr. Catesberry, of course, was aware that the younger man was the elder's nephew, but his testimony about the letter of introduction to Richard Rawson, the coldness between the two brothers and Walter's boyish dislike of his uncle only confirmed the general belief that a deep and relentless hatred, covering some bitter family secret, kept them apart.

When asked about Cotton Mather, Walter only sneered in answer:

"I have too much on my mind to keep track of all my father's enemies."

Walter Rawson was not known to have been connected in any way with the National Improvement Company. He never had been seen inside its offices, and had declined in the most public manner a request from its board of directors to lend his name to the syndicate that placed a part of its bonds abroad; he admitted that he had bought a few thousand shares of its stock as a speculation, and that he had believed its franchises very valuable; he never lost an opportunity, however, to speak ill of the company's president, Cotton Mather.

Apparently, Walter Rawson had too many other important financial schemes on hand to give much attention to the complications growing out of the disgraceful Mississippi business. He really knew nothing about his "blind" partner's whereabouts, and though he did not believe him dead, could not explain to himself why he had decamped.

Returning to the poor old miserable whom we left in Paris, the narrative of his year at the French capital will be read with interest:

For the first six months he was a close patient at the hospital, and had the best medical attendance that Europe afforded. Becoming no worse at the end of that time, the rules of the institution forbade his remaining longer. It was in vain that he offered larger payments to be allowed to stay.

At the suggestion of an attendant, he rented part of a house in a little street, quite near the hospital, where he made arrangements to have treatment.

The apartments comprised a small sitting-room, kitchen, and two bed-chambers. Next arose a greater difficulty—the hiring of a servant. Poor old "Monsieur Cotton" (he used to wonder if it would ever become necessary to further abbreviate his name!) could not exercise much choice in the selection of a man-of-all-work, because he had the frankness to read to them a entence in French that the interpreter at the hospitals had written down on a card for him and coached him to pronounce.

It created a panic whenever read.

"I believe I am a leper!"

For three days every applicant for the place fled in terror, imperfectly as the words were spoken. In more than one instance the fugitives left their bundles of clothes behind, and never returned for them. On the fourth day a diminutive, swarthy-faced, bandy-legged fellow applied at the door for the situation. Cotton

found, to his intense gratification, that the man spoke a few words of English, such as heard among the Lascars along the Mediterranean coast. When the greeting was slowly pronounced, mostly in English monosyllables and with elaborate pantomime:

"I [pointing to himself] want you [pointing at the applicant]. I pay much [reaching down into his pocket and showing a handful of gold]. I am *lèpre*"—to Cotton's surprise the man never moved a muscle of his face, but said, with a shrug of the shoulders:

"No ca-ra."

"Give me your hand, my good fellow," exclaimed Cotton, as he thrust out his palm in the enthusiasm of the moment, believing that his search was ended.

"Pardona, monsieur. Ex-cuse-a me."

And the queer little hunchback thrust both his hands into his pockets, eyeing the palm of his prospective master suspiciously.

"What your name?" asked the American, with considerable pointing, and explanation in words not found in the hunchback's vocabulary.

"Name? Jacques."

"Jack. All right. How much?"

Holding up both hands, with the thumbs and fingers extended, the swarthy fellow said:

"*Dix francs*, alla week." Then he opened and shut his fingers again.

"Ten francs! Why, man, I 'll give you twenty—a Louis," exclaimed Cotton, showing him a shining Napoleon. Growing enthusiastic and thoughtless, he con-

tinued: "My check is good for a million. My name is——"

"No ca-ra, monsieur."

"Moo-seer?"

"*Si.*"

The poor old merchant turned pale. Even Jacques had tampered with his name, and shortened it.

Without further parley, or any indication that he understood a single part of the contract beyond the wages he was to receive, the crooked little fellow hobbled into the kitchen, hung up a bundle containing his wardrobe, produced an apron from one of his coat pockets, and formally installed himself.

During the remainder of the time spent in Paris, this servant was the constant attendant of the wretched old man, who rarely left his rooms. He ran errands, cooked, washed the dishes, kept the house in order, and fell heir to all his master's cast-off clothes—which he was ordered to burn, but kept and sold. This proved a splendid perquisite, for his master never put on an article of under-clothing a second time. Everything was bought in quantities, and when once worn was ordered to be destroyed. Such was the course of "Monsieur Cotton's" life during the second six months.

One after another, the most eminent physicians of Paris critically examined his case, and although every attempt at a diagnosis ended with a shake of the doctor's head, in only one instance did the practitioner decline a fee. The learned and famous Dr. Lambonnet said, petulantly:

"You owe me nothing. I only prescribe for the sick."

All the physicians agreed that nothing could be done for the patient, and several experts suggested that he had better return to the United States.

Cotton was undecided what they meant, and, consequently, knew not how to act. He kept himself as well informed as possible about American affairs. The faithful Jacques procured the New York newspapers for him regularly, at a kiosk on the Boulevard, near the Place de l' Opera.

The hopeless old man's only source of amusement during those dreary months was a telegraph apparatus, which he had purchased in the small shop of a dealer in second-hand goods. He had taught himself the use of the sound instrument during his leisure at "The Willows," years before, encouraged thereto by Professor Morton. In Paris, he rigged up a battery, and having connected the kitchen with the sitting-room by a wire he entertained himself for hours by sending messages to imaginary friends in the rear room. Jacques fell into the spirit of the diversion, and was soon able to respond to the calls which his master made for water, warm bricks, pills, coffee, newspapers, or shoes.

One day he sent out commissionaires, summoned a half dozen of the best physicians together to a consultation. They united in giving him a long certificate which he could not read, as it was in French, but which he understood to convey the doleful intelligence that his disease could not be unseated by any medicine known

to science; he was verbally advised to seek change of air and climate. This certificate, which he carefully filed away among his papers, cost him 5,000 francs; but he never knew its contents.

This inquisition set him to thinking. He recognized the fact that his malady had not made noticeable progress. Suddenly the impulse seized him to return to New York. But how could he explain his absence? He was given up for dead. Then why not allow the world to believe so? Go he would, and hide himself amid the loneliness of bustling, busy New York.

More careful of the fate of others than when, in his half-frenzied state, he had crossed to Bordeaux in the midst of nearly one hundred fellow steerage passengers, he decided to charter a small schooner at Havre and set sail at once. This he did, and with his faithful valet reached New York after a month's tempestuous voyage. Stopping at Quarantine, he paid off the captain and proceeded at once to the city by the Staten Island ferry. Recognition was hardly possible, as he knew very few persons in New York, and, besides, the removal of his massive beard had greatly changed his appearance.

Where to locate himself had been his constant thought during the ocean voyage. His fancy had finally fixed on a lofty bit of ground overlooking the Harlem, near High Bridge. He repaired directly to Tremont, a northern suburb of New York, and applied to the first house-agent he could hear of. There he learned to his great joy that an old residence, high above the river

and on the northern bank, was untenanted and for rent. The property was visited at once in the agent's company, and the old man was delighted. It was just the place for him. The house was old and badly out of repair, but the rooms in the second story were dry and clean. This served his purpose, for he did not expect to entertain any visitors. The dwelling faced the road to Jerome Park and stood in the center of about ten acres of ground, surrounded by a stone wall on all sides.

Paying a year's rent in advance, he received the keys and took possession.

It was a queer old house, and had been built long before the city had spread out north of the Harlem. Drainage was furnished through an underground conduit nearly a foot in diameter, leading from a corner of the cellar down hill to the Harlem river, about eight hundred feet distant. Jacques made the discovery one night by finding a lot of water-rats eating the vegetables. The fact was communicated to the master of the house, but he treated the information very lightly.

One of Cotton's first acts was to purchase a large battery and to wire off the house with electric bells. Burglar alarms were placed on all the doors and windows, so that the master could keep track of his servant's movements. He employed much of his time in telegraphing messages to imaginary brokers. As at Paris, this was his only means of mental diversion. He read the papers carefully, and studied the possibilities of the stock market just as if he were interested in it. Thus the long winter passed.

During the early part of the spring, the existence of the old drain to the river suddenly recurred to him one afternoon, and after his custom he mentally elaborated the idea thus:

"Why cannot I open telegraphic communication with Walter? But it must be in such a way that he cannot find me; I cannot have him see me in my misery. It can be done. The old drain communicates with the river. In a stream a wire soon hides itself in the mud so that it cannot be taken up. I 'll reach him; I will stand beside him to the end."

In a close carriage Cotton visited a manufacturer of telegraphic supplies near Trinity Church, and in a week had made and stored in his cellar a quarter of a mile of half-inch cable. He supposed it could be pushed through the drain, but he found that impossible. Jacques came to the rescue. He set a trap, and in an hour had caught a large water-rat. Procuring a ball of strong cord, one end was fastened about this rat's neck, after which the animal was started down the drain. The rodent made such remarkable time that it was with difficulty the line was paid out rapidly enough. Cotton stood at the mouth of the drain, which was out of water at low tide, and, killing the animal as it emerged, secured the clew line. This he carefully tied to a stone, which he buried in the mud. On the next dark night a heavy piece of rope was drawn through the drain from the house outward, and a windlass having been extemporized in the cellar, the cable, which had been coiled up on the grass near the river, was

drawn up into the building. The other end of the wire was loaded into the stern of a small boat that had been hired for the purpose, and was paid out across the narrow stream to an old wharf, under which it was attached to a beam just above high-water mark. Returning to his own shore, Cotton carefully buried the cable about three feet under the sand at the culvert's mouth, piling heavy stones upon the place. Everything was cleared up by daylight, and no traces of the night's work remained.

The next day Cotton dropped a brief note to Walter Rawson. It read as follows :

"If you will connect one of the dead wires in the cable box below High Bridge with the end of a small cable to be found under the old wharf on the right, you will be able to communicate with your partner and friend ; but it is to be understood that you are not to try to ascertain his whereabouts."

Rawson, in his position as principal stockholder, and as a director of the great telegraph company, had only to ask that a dead wire running out the Boulevard be turned over to him, to secure it. He then had a direct connection made with his office, and dispatching a trusty workman to High Bridge, the end of the cable from the river was soon carried directly into the box. There it was bent on to the dead wire, and direct communication was thus opened between Cotton's room and Rawson's private office. The line was less than eleven miles long, and, measured by the tangent galvinometer and rheostat, a resistance of 120 ohms was

found on the wire. Cotton calculated, carefully, that two relays of 150 ohms each and two low resistance sounders, of say 50 ohms each, would make a total resistance of 520 ohms. This being the fact, a fifteen-cell battery would be more than sufficient to operate the line.

As it was desirable, however, to forestall any curiosity on the part of his friends to find him, and to prevent them from looking for him so near home, he employed a thirty-cell battery, and increased the resistance of his relay to six hundred ohms. This, he reasoned, would give the impression that the line was at least fifty miles long.

The first greeting between the two men after their long separation was very warm. No names were ever mentioned, for Rawson had to employ the services of his confidential operator, not being able to read by sound.

Cotton had sent him by mail an elaborate code but it was rarely used, so complete was Rawson's confidence in his operator, and their mutual trust in the in, violability of the private wire. At Cotton's express command, all knowledge of his return to life was kept from Mootla. Her grief for her benefactor was constant.

"He was always good to me," she said. "Mine was the happiest childhood a girl could possibly know."

A change in Walter Rawson's manner was observable immediately. He had felt an obligation to be cau-

tious in his use of the millions in the blind pool until the mystery regarding his partner's disappearance was in some rational manner cleared away. Now that Cotton was somewhere at which he could be consulted, however indefinite that place might be, Rawson became bolder, and, if possible, more reckless in his speculation than ever before.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE POLONAISE.

DURING all those months in which the sagacious Congressmen had been giving their exclusive attention to the Nation's majestic watercourse, and the civilian members of the political estate had been buying its stock certificates, the real traders in Wall Street had undertaken the development of the railroads of the South and Southwest. They declared that the future had little promise for any line of rails that did not feed this vast and undeveloped section of the country. "The Gulf ports are to be the future seats of commerce," said they.

Mobile, a deserted city with grass grown streets, awoke with a start and began a new career on the infusion of the warm blood of northern capital. Claims in behalf of her commerce reappeared in the annual River and Harbor Bill. Other ports on the Atlantic were not slow in imitating Mobile's example.

A mad rush to buy Southern railroad stocks followed. It was led by the very class of men who had hugged themselves for their shrewdness in resisting the temptations of the National Improvement Company. This was the only class that had not come to Rawson's net heretofore, and he saw at once that opportunity had favored him.

He hurried away to the South. Small and disjointed

sections of road were purchased or leased at nominal rentals—consolidated, welded together by new links of rail—and soon grew under Rawson's magic touch into gigantic "systems." Through cars were in a few months running from New York to New Orleans. Other trunk lines connected Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah and Louisville with the metropolis of the Gulf. The national capital, Washington—that Federal city which had seen the dawn of this new prosperity—was not overlooked.

Walter Rawson shunned no responsibility for the prevailing financial craze. Had he not warned all who sought his counsel that the Mississippi Improvement was a fraud? Certainly he had, though Cotton and he kept in a strong box at one of their own safe deposit vaults nearly fifty millions in money which had been received from the sale of the "National's" stocks and bonds. He did not fear to defy the general drift of the market by raiding Northern railway shares whenever the impulse seized him. He would send his well known lieutenants upon the floor of the exchange and openly sell down the securities of the companies in whose boards he sat as a director. His newspapers were employed to attack the credit of the most stable corporations of the land, which he branded as worthless property only forty-eight hours before an eight or ten per cent. dividend was declared. With equal unscrupulousness, Rawson would cause his morning chanticleer to announce prospective stock allotments the day before his directors met and "passed" all dividends for a year. After a few weeks, or months, it

would be discovered that profits had been earned and the division would be made to the owners of record on the day the registration books were closed. Everything Rawson touched was as a shuttlecock in his hands. He assaulted the members of the political estate every time any of them reappeared in the market. They rarely ventured on the "bear" side of the fence, for they were "bulls on the country." Some of them had by this time attained the dignity of State Governors, others of city "bosses," still others of retired statesmen; but they all went into the ditch together. The millions they had amassed during the Civil War by "discounting the dead" and "coppering the Government" were torn from them. Among the professional heroes a few intended victims had escaped. An appeal to their patriotism now rallied them for another grand charge. Rawson proposed to make it a Balaklava dash from which they would never return. The bugle sounded:

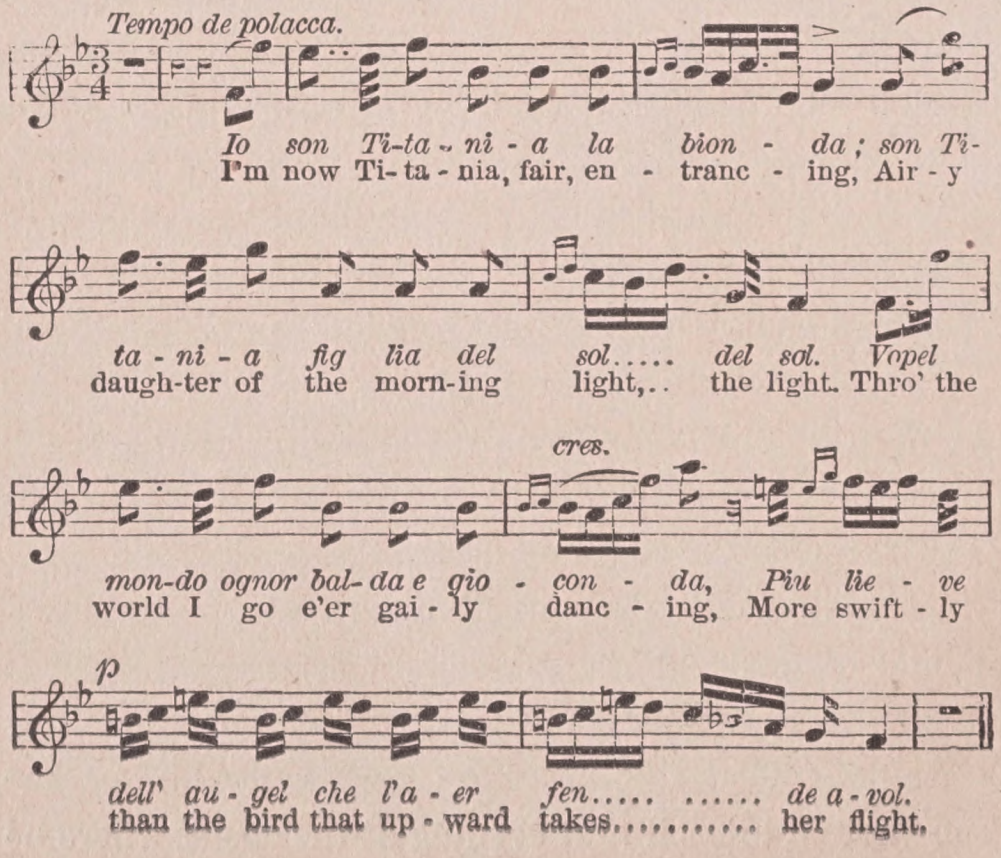
"To New Orleans, as the eagle flies!"

For this hour there had been weeks of preparation. Through channels ensuring the widest publicity it had been given out that Rawson was about to "lift the market." "All Southern railway shares are too low," were the words ascribed to him. "New Orleans Trunk line is the best buy on the list."

This information was worth a mascotte, or a philosopher's stone; and the number of persons who had it imparted to them "confidentially" one afternoon was not few. That all the town might see him, Rawson showed himself that evening at the opera, where he

owned a box, but rarely occupied it. "Mignon" was sung. The cast was a great one, and included Campanini, Del Puente, Cary, Marimon, and Gerster.

Walter Rawson was passionately fond of the opera, especially Ambroise Thomas's music. He knew every number in "Mignon," but on this night Marimon sang the polonaise at the end of the second act so charmingly that the music of that theme fastened itself upon his mind. He drove home in his coupé, humming it. The polka vibrated through his dreams, and the first words to reach his lips in the morning were "*Io son Titania.*" He carried the theme down-street with him, and in the half-hour that preceded the opening of the Stock Exchange he unconsciously returned again and again to the pretty air.



There was not a man in the world except his partner who really knew what Rawson was going to do, though a thousand thought they did.

This day really belongs to the history of speculation, for the reason that it marks the introduction into stock operations of the hired *clacquer*. Rawson had sent out his small army of "point" givers, who, as soon as the Exchange opened, swarmed among the offices of Broad and New Streets like flies. Casually dropping in on one broker after another, they offered a hint there and essayed a prophecy here. All of these useful tools of the great schemer were working in perfect good faith. That's the beauty of the system. They were not paid in any direct way, except that now and then they were allowed to make a few hundred dollars in some pool organized for their benefit and for which Rawson generally furnished the capital. The honor which was reflected on them by the supposed possession of Rawson's confidence amply compensated them. There is the same feeling of satisfaction at being able to name the winner in a horse-race or the candidate at a political convention that there is in giving a sure "point" on stocks.

Rawson had introduced this pretty detail into the business. He had learned it under the bright tuition of Adolphus Dobell, who had a habit of sending himself bogus telegrams, conveying information just the opposite of what he intended to act on. Dobell had discovered that such information always leaked out over the wires or through his own office. Thus had the fine old

gentleman, in more than one instance, been able to get largely "short" at the top of the market. There was, to be sure, much lying connected with such work; but he had consoled himself with the reflection that it was other people and not he who told the falsehoods. As Rawson knew, however, better than anybody else, the clerks in Dobell's own office had scented out the scheme, after getting their fingers burned badly several times, and by acting on the side contrary to that indicated, had virtually had a "put" on their employer in every speculation that he rigged in that way. Rawson's professional "point-giver" was therefore a step in advance of Dobell's method. It was the coming shadow of the open marketing of "puts," "calls," and "straddles" since introduced.

The men selected for this work were generally associated in an undefined manner with the large railroad corporations, such as clerks on small salaries, but often without desks or title in their own offices. These persons were mostly young men of good manners, fairly well dressed, and possessed of a large and miscellaneous circle of acquaintances.

On this bright crisp morning the talk in twenty of the most popular brokers' offices on the Street was all pitched in one key. To condense twenty conversations into one paragraph, it was said:

"Rawson has been buying 'New Orleans' for a month. He is going to 'boost' it to-day. It is about to declare a fifty per cent. scrip dividend—but don't mention what I tell you."

For once rumor was apparently correct. By eleven o'clock there were half a dozen brokers, directly associated with Rawson, on the floor of the Exchange, bidding for New Orleans at the market price. Little stock was offered, however, because of the stories floating about the room. This hesitation on the part of the holders of the stock was soon followed by a torrent of orders to buy at a quarter, three-eighths, and, finally, a half point better. This brought out about 6,000 shares of the stock, nearly all of it being taken in the most ostentatious manner by Rawson's own brokers. Bids were then made for 1,000-share lots at an eighth and quarter better than the best of the day, but no offers were heard. Soon after, one of Rawson's men added another quarter for 2,000 shares, with the result of its being sold to him by one of the blind partners of the arch manipulator, a broker who had received an order through one of his associate houses to sell 2,000 Orleans in one block, whenever 86 was bid. He was ignorant of the real fact that the man who bought was the person who sold.

This "washed sale," or rather should we say purchased? was of such a character that it gave the first real fright to the large "short" interest. Within ten minutes there was a genuine stampede to buy in stock that had already been sold for future delivery at a lower figure. This, independently of Rawson's influence, promptly advanced the price two dollars under purchases of 11,000 shares. Of this stock other con-

federates of Rawson sold the commission brokers 8,000 shares, all at an advance on the prices of the morning.

It was not desirable, however, to have all the "shorts" covered so early. Rawson knew that the bold "bears" in the street had been at least 30,000 shares short of Orleans in the morning. To check the stampede at this point, he had only to let the market alone for half an hour. The result was a halt in the advance and a reaction of half a point. This had been called "feeling the pulse of the market."

In a similar way is the condemned man on the scaffold lowered until the medical experts can listen to the beating of his heart, or thumb the struggling arteries.

So the market was left to itself for a time. The "bears" took new courage. Some believed the "shower" was over and all hoped they were on the right side, after all. There were few bold brokers in those days, as now. Had there been, Rawson would have had less leisure to eat his luncheon during that half hour's masterly inactivity.

Rawson had foreseen all the difficulties that were likely to threaten him. He had taken care that money should be plenty, and on the slightest intimation of an increase in the interest rate, his banks doled out two millions on call loans. Therefore, there was ample opportunity for everybody to take "a flyer" in Orleans Air Line.

During the lull, between boards, people compared notes.

"What do I think of the market?" was one broker's interrogatory rejoinder to his customers. "Why, there's only one thing to think——" and he hurried out to execute an order before he committed himself.

"What is the best purchase?" answered another broker in an office across the street. "Well, I never advise a customer; but the people who are buying Orleans at 86 so freely must see something good in it. Money is so plenty, you know. Did you say 500 at the market price?"

That's exactly what the customer had said, and it was what many an ill-advised man whispered that afternoon. Bright, clever fellows, these brokers. What a pity it is that the stern laws of the Exchange compel them to charge one-eighth of one per cent. on every transaction, whether their customer wins a fortune or loses his last dollar! They never would exact the pound of flesh in the latter case were it not for that cruel law. And who made it? Oh, not they; some of their wicked partners.

The gossip received a new impulse. One speculator, more venturesome than the rest, called to see Rawson himself. This is what *he* told:

"The messenger who had taken my card inside reappeared, and said, 'Mr. Rawson begs that his friend Mr. Brown will excuse him this afternoon, as he has set himself to put the market up.'"

This report, straight from the arch speculator's own cabinet, spread like wild-fire. Its egotism was wholly overlooked, as Rawson knew it would be; but its

echoes began to be heard in nearly every office within sound of Trinity chimes. They took these forms:

"Everything is going up. Money two and a half to three per cent. Nothing can check the advance," echo first.

"The five hundred Orleans you bought an hour ago shows $500 profit already. They do say it's good for ten points yet," echo second.

"The scrip dividend has been decided on; earnings, twenty per cent.," echo third.

"There is a corner in New Orleans!" ominous and appalling echo fourth.

The man who sells what he doesn't own quails and trembles before the bare suspicion of a "corner" in the stock of which he is "short."

Meanwhile the "boom" had re-opened. Starting again at 85½, it was scarce at 89 in twenty minutes. Rawson had bought 23,000 shares, mostly from himself, and had sold 17,000 to other people. Despite the trifling reactions that followed, he contrived to market all the long stocks which he had started with in the morning. Now, it only remained to put the general market a point or two higher to bring in "the great public" and the last of the "shorts." Under ordinary circumstances, he would have preferred to wait yet another day, but on this occasion it was imperative that the course of the stock should be run before the Exchange closed. Rawson therefore caused to be sent out over the tape of a local telegraph company he owned the announcement that the New Orleans directors had

been summoned to a special meeting at three o'clock. This was enough. The traders took hold of the stock in earnest. It gleefully bounded to 92 under the buying of the "shorts"—a rise of nine points since the opening of the Exchange. It was easily within Rawson's power to have put the stock to 95, but he realized that an advance of exactly ten dollars would bring out large quantities of long stock that stopping the rise at nine dollars might prevent. But he put the price to 92, and held it there. Rawson's recognized buyers of the morning were still purchasers whenever the market sagged off an eighth or a quarter. Nearly all the stock bought by the "shorts" to cover their sales was got from Rawson. All his actual purchases of the day, which were not large, were turned over to them. He then went "short" of the market himself, beginning at 92, and sold Orleans at every possible opportunity.

The day was one of great excitement on the floor of the Stock Exchange and in the street; but let us see how Rawson passed the hours. He was in his private office, alone. The door was locked, and with his hands in his pockets he was walking about the room. His was a condition of mind in which he never had been seen by any of his friends. It would naturally be supposed that he was serious, moody, thoughtful. On the contrary, he was in a state of boyish exhilaration. He whistled, sang—even danced at times. The polonaise of "Mignon" was the *theme* of his actions, just as the course of the stock market furnished the *motif*.

The music of the ticker was constantly heard, and

so expert had his ear become that he could read it without looking at the tape. He sang for no living ears but his—

"Or-leans ninety, bet-ter right away;
Son Ti-ta-ni-a—all the wide world wants it."

Then, he hummed the rest of the number. Again the ticker began to sing, the price of the stock to jump and Rawson to accompany it—

"Now 'tis a half, O child of light!
A quar-ter, a-gain? No, three eighths! Half. It holds."

Rawson stepped to the sideboard and lit a cigar as he almost shouted between his teeth—

"Hur-rah! Ti-ta-nia, glad and gay.

"Am I right?" he asked himself, turning suddenly to the stock indicator. "Yes, a sale at five-eighths. I take it? No; they've got it, for here 's 2,000 at three-quarters. Steady, look out! Next sale at a half, only a hundred. I feared it. Work of a boy, probably. Wrong; a correction, '100 at three-quarters.' That's much better, for—

"'*Son Ti-ta-ni-a*'—give 'em ev'ry share.

"It's good for 91 in three minutes. Seven-eighths. Quite right—

"O! I have them, Daughter of Light . . ."

Useless as it appeared, some other stocks were occasionally traded in. An interval of this kind occurred at this point, and a glance showed that the entire

market was soaring toward higher prices, "like the bird that upward wings her flight." The delay was short. New Orleans reappeared with a flash. Rawson called off the figures as fast as the machine printed them: "500 at seven-eighths; 1,000 at 91 [rising inflection]. I said it." Then, humming the polonaise once more, Rawson dropped into a chair. He tried to sit still. Impossible, for here came the rush of the "shorts," like a whirlwind, to cover—a scene which has already been described from the better vantage point of the Exchange itself. The overworked "ticker" struggled to give the transactions, apparently gorged with figures, letters and tape. Ere he could sing it into melody Orleans was furiously bid for at 92.

At sight of that fact, a tremor crossed Rawson's face. Could it be that this stock was really worth so much? Were stronger hands than his gathering it up? Had their ears been serpent-licked that they could read the future better than he?

This doubt of his power was momentary; it passed away into the rythm of the polonaise. He saw the seat of war; in mind, he faced the Long Room; he heard the shouts and felt the jostling crowd——

Can this be Walter Rawson that we see, the phenomenally cool, unexcitable man! 'Tis he indeed; his inmost self that we have studied, not playing a part, but surrendering to his natural feeling. He is completely himself, only because under lock and key.

When three o'clock sounded from Trinity church

trading came to a standstill. There was silence in Rawson's room until a knock came at the door. With his usual gravity, Walter opened the portal, and his chief lieutenant handed him the following:

[MEMORANDUM.]

TO SPECIAL ACCOUNT.

Bought.	*Shares.*	*Sold.*	*Shares.*
Orleans, 83 @ 91 . .	22,900	Orleans, 92 @ 86 . .	42,660
Less Acct. "washed"	11,200	Less actual purchase .	11,700
Actual purchase . .	11,700	Carried to Short Acct.	30,960

Thus had Rawson contrived to get "short" of the market 30,960 shares of Orleans, the 11,200 in "washed" purchases, costing no more than the trifling commission which one broker exacts of another for transactions of the kind, namely, $2 per hundred shares. The neatest feature about the affair was that the market was quoted "steady" at the close of the day's trading.

But, alas, the weather vane would change ere daylight. The morrow was to usher in that chilling mistral which so often blows suddenly 'round the corner of Wall Street into Broad, penetrating to the financial maelstrom itself, and known among the traders along that coast as—"A Bear Raid."

"Ah, I have discovered the secret," self-communed Walter Rawson, as he locked the brief memorandum in his desk. "Life in Wall Street is set to music, like

the polonaise. One has only to write in a note here and there to preserve the harmony. 'I 'm Ti-ta-nia, fairy queen.' . . ."

A moment later he passed out, demure and silent, to his coupé and started homeward. As his vehicle turned from Broadway into Fifth Avenue, at Madison Square, a feeling of faintness came over him. In an open barouche, approaching from the opposite direction, sat a woman of wondrously attractive face. There was a grief in her eyes unfathomable as an abyss. Her gaze was not fixed on anything, she was looking into the past. She was alone—forever more doomed to be so. Rawson sank back into the shadows of the close vehicle, and, pale and trembling, raised his hat and remained uncovered while the open carriage, with its solitary occupant, moved by funereally. The woman did not see him, though she was so close he could look into her face, as he had in his dream on the morning of his wedding-day. His was "The Salute of the Dead"—a quaint French custom that rich and poor, happy and miserable, respect and observe.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DOBELL CORNERS HIMSELF.

HARDLY had Rawson reached home before he was surprised by a visit from his former employer, Adolphus Dobell. It was the first time that gentleman had honored Rawson with a call, and, though the younger man's vanity was touched, he was thoroughly on his guard. Dobell congratulated him on his success during the day in sustaining the Orleans shares, and in a burst of confidence, as it appeared, asked:

"I say, Rawson, are you 'short' of Mexico and Manitoba?"

The younger man looked at the speaker closely. He had generally addressed him as "Walter" prior to that moment. It did not need a philosopher to perceive that the old operator's game was to raise the younger man to his own level in order that he might make an appeal to old friendship. In order that the trick should be unmasked at once, Rawson replied, in the frankest manner he could assume:

"No, indeed, Dobell; not a share."

"I'm very glad of that, because I am at the head of a pool to 'corner' that stock. The 'corner' is an accomplished fact already."

"I certainly congratulate you," said Rawson, dryly.

"Thanks, to be sure; but—but there is a favor I want to ask of you."

Rawson was silent, though Dobell stopped to allow him to proffer the service in advance.

"You know, Rawson," continued the old speculator, "that you were associated with me so long—very pleasantly associated—that I can foresee, or think I can, what you are about to do——"

"Indeed, you surprise me, for I hardly know myself."

"Ah! Rawson, my boy, I am not to be fooled. You are going to 'jump on' the market."

"Why, Dobell, you must have dreamed that. It is no time now——"

"Just what I think, Rawson. Exactly my idea. Don't do it. That is," stammered Dobell, realizing that his personal interest had been completely exposed by his impetuosity, "I'd wait awhile. You'll be able to sell 'em at higher figures, much higher."

"Pshaw, Dobell; I can't break this market. It is too strong for any one man to contend against."

"Precisely my opinion. The crops are on their way East, and the earnings of all the trunk lines will show a large increase."

The florid style which Dobell assumed was utterly strange to him. Rawson read him, as almost any one might have done, and understood that Dobell feared that a stubborn "raid" might discompose some of the old man's associates and endanger the stability of the pool. He took the conversation in hand by giving it a sudden twist:

"You say the 'corner' is certain of success?"

"Oh, yes. We have nine-tenths of the entire capital stock, and shall secure the remainder within the next forty-eight hours. So adroitly has it been bought, and so judiciously loaned out that the price has not greatly advanced. I attended to all that myself."

"Is it a 'blind pool,' and have you personal control of the operation?"

"Not exactly that far, but its members are all men of the strictest integrity——"

"Then look out for them. Men of 'notorious integrity' are generally frightful cowards in money matters, and if it is necessary to save themselves, will 'unload' on you," suggested Rawson, to draw the old gentleman out, concluding with an apology for his audacity in volunteering such an intimation.

"There isn't a particle of fear," rejoined Dobell, in an uncertain tone of voice that was far from indicating a vast amount of confidence. "We shall buy all the stock; then we shall buy as much again; after which we shall advance the price to $250 per share, or more."

"Certainly, I understand," said Rawson, rather abruptly. He wanted Dobell to comprehend that he was no longer a clerk in his office and in need of instruction. "You will get the road for nothing and be paid a premium for taking it?"

Poor Dobell! He had begun badly and couldn't get right. Whatever may be the estimate which the future will place on his name as a financier, Dolly

Dobell certainly was not a diplomatist. Some of his awkwardness, in this instance, may have been due to the long acquaintance which he had had with the rising railroad magnate, the almost paternal regard he felt for the younger man, and the respect which he imagined the daring broker entertained for him. He never had been an acute student of human nature, but this was the first instance in which he had entrusted his future, without reserve, to anybody. He blundered now, simply because he assumed that he had a right to expect fidelity from Walter Rawson.

A wise man never puts himself in the power of even his best friend. It is not business-like—any more than singing flat among a congregation of real lovers of music is praising God.

He finally realized that the only way to attain the purpose of his visit was to come squarely to the point. He said :

"Rawson, I want you in this pool."

"You are very kind ; there seems to be big money in it——"

"No limit," interjected Dobell.

"But the fact is I have so many schemes on foot of a small nature that I am disinclined to go into anything of that magnitude."

"Still, you will surely consider the proposition ? Any personal friends of yours who may get caught in the net will be treated leniently," begged Dobell.

"My friends will have to take care of their own gills. I can't go in."

"Then you *will* agree to wait a few days before you attack the market? Promise me this."

"I will."

Dobell went home very happy that evening. He flattered himself that he controlled the most audacious mind in Wall Street. His blunder was even greater than that, for he was incautious enough to boast of his power to a trusted friend, who lost no time in having the remark conveyed to Rawson.

True to his promise, however, Rawson delayed the "bear raid" on the New Orleans trunk line for a week, putting out even a larger line of shorts in a quiet, judicious manner, though his brokers were publicly buying the stock in very small quantities on the floor of the Exchange. He even "covered" some of his maturing obligations at a loss to divert suspicion from his real intention.

Meanwhile the Mexico and Manitoba *had* been advanced to $250 bid—$300 asked—and the Street was in a whirl of excitement over the discovery of the "corner." Every customer in each down-town office was blaming his broker for not getting him into the rise early. Every certificate of loaned stock had been called and not a share was to be had except from the pool which had its headquarters at Dobell's office.

Rawson had been inactive for a week, as has been said. He had looked the situation over carefully, however, and had fixed upon the list of persons in the pool so nearly that he could have named most of them. He thought he knew where the weak vessels

were and the probable amount of their holdings. One afternoon, at this time, and within an hour of the closing of the Exchange, Dobell hurriedly entered Rawson's outer office and, before his approach was noticed by the porter, knocked for admittance at the private door. When Rawson opened, Dobell almost shoved him aside in entering. The old man was pale and haggard. His lips were bloodless, and his eyes stared vacantly about the room as if to assure himself that they were alone. Then he exclaimed :

"My dear Rawson, I have come to ask your assistance. We need just one mil-le-on to make the thing sure."

The facts (which he kept from Rawson, but which the alert mind of the latter had already learned from the record of sales on the tape) were that Dobell had been dreadfully frightened by the sudden appearance of several blocks of Mexico and Manitoba, offered for cash, which he had been forced to buy at the "corner" price to sustain the market. This had created a sudden demand for money for which Dobell was unprepared. His credit at the banks was exhausted, and he had no alternative but to appeal to his friends, fatal as that course might be. Worst of all, he suspected that his own copartners were false to him. The shares were evidently "long" stock—for no sane man would dare to sell for immediate delivery certificates which he did not possess. So he had reasoned ; and in a condition almost bordering on collapse he had come to Rawson for aid.

Before the latter had mentally surveyed the situation, Dobell added, interrogatively:

"You will let me have it, Walter, of course?"

"Mr. Dobell, I regret to say that you have applied at the wrong place," rejoined Rawson, coldly. Dobell staggered under the blow, but clutching at the back of a chair, steadied himself, and backed toward the door.

"Then you refuse me! I thought I had only to ask you——" stammered he.

"The time is very inopportune, that's all."

Rawson bowed him out calmly.

Then his whole manner changed. "Now!" he said. He glanced at the clock on his desk. Half-past two!—just thirty minutes left! He rang his bell, and sent for every clerk in his office. When they came he closed the door, and stood with his back against it as he said:

"I want 20,000 shares of Mexico and Manitoba sold at 'best,' in 500 and 1,000 share lots, within the next twenty minutes. There are four of you. Each man must sell 4,000. I will attend to a like amount myself. Be sure of your customers, but sell—anywhere down to 200. Let 'er go!"

Rawson then stepped to the telephone, called Scratch & Heath, brokers for three of the most prominent members of Dobell's pool, and ordered them to sell 4,000 Manitoba for his account at the market price. He did this to create the impression that the Dobell pool was throwing its stock on the market.

The scene that followed in the Stock Exchange is historical. Ten thousand shares broke the price to 200, and after the gong struck, "long" stock was freely offered at 150. The "corner" was broken.

That night there was a picture of human misery in the gallery of life—a veritable masterpiece. Poor old Dolly Dobell was found wandering aimlessly about the streets of New York in his night-shirt, muttering:

"On'y a mil-le-on, sir. On'y a mil-le-on."

A week later he died in a madhouse.

Promptly upon the heels of the break in the Manitoba "corner" began one of the most memorable "bear raids" in the history of Wall Street. Loans were called in; money was simultaneously bid up, and stocks of all descriptions, Orleans in particular, were offered down, down, down. There were no rallies. For a month money ranged as high as a quarter of one per cent. per day. Every member of the Mexico and Manitoba pool was crippled. Every broker's office had its living figures of despair. Men who had hoped for large profits were already calculating their losses by tens of thousands. Occasionally a halt occurred, but it proved only a calm before a new attack. Then would follow a burst of heavy artillery, succeeded by a general bayonet-charge all along the line. Cool and desperate men who had answered every roll-call with the words "More Margin!" were stabbed to death in the last ditch.

Hope, ever renewing itself, was finally banished. The journals that had commended half the stocks on

the list, just before the decline began, now pronounced them all worthless. The wise men pocketed their losses and took a trip to the country. Others clung to the tape and bought for a rise at every halt, only to sell at a loss on each new decline. Habitual "bull" operators swore they would never deal on the "long" side again, but delayed to screw their courage up sufficiently to act on their resolution until the bottom had been struck. They sold the market, therefore, just as the tide turned, only to suffer the mortification of "covering" at a round advance. Many of the most experienced operators in the street were caught both ways.

The campaign closed as it had begun, for on the evening of the day in which the advance was fairly inaugurated Rawson went to the theatre to see John S. Clarke in "The Heir-at-Law," and was especially pleased when "Dr. Pangloss" remarked to his pupil:

"Under favor, young gentleman, I'm the bear leader."

Rawson gave the words an interpretation of his own, unsuspected by the author of the farce, but that did not alter the humor of the scene.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MUTINY AMONG THE WOUNDED.

THERE were two hundred millions in "The Blind Pool." The creatures of the political estate were shivering under the constant and overshadowing terrors of exposure and disgrace, or were miserably suffering from the gnawing pangs of acute poverty. Their money was gone, and retribution pursued them. Day after day the columns of Cotton's newspapers bristled with dark hints and insinuations, intelligible to the wretched political demagogues, and interpreted by the public with an accuracy that would not have been possible before an aggressive crusade had made the secrets of Congressional methods known to nearly every voter in the land. In this relentless warfare *The Cyclone* also dealt savage and effectual blows. It was no part of John Burnaby's purpose to serve the malice of wretched old Cotton. He did not know of his existence in the flesh. But Burnaby hated roguery and hypocrisy and attacked every man who prospered by them, from Rawson, his former friend, down to the lowest political or financial adventurer.

John Burnaby was exceedingly happy in his home life. This was largely owing to the fact that the

glitter of society did not dazzle Mootla's eyes, or obscure her naturally clear judgment. She never sought approval of her domestic policy outside her own house. She repelled all foreign intervention, after the strictest interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. "The Home for its Inmates" was the key to her philosophy. Socially, she was careful to avoid entangling alliances. Mootla Burnaby lived for only two persons, now that she believed "good Uncle Cotton" dead—her husband and her son. The latter was a chubby bit of humanity that knew her voice and gurgled a welcome whenever his mother entered the domain of the nursery. Though not the palladium of domestic happiness—for an attack of colic had convinced even Prince Baby that he held a very slender tenure of life—he was the prospective heir to *The Cyclone.* His interests were thoroughly guarded by his next friend. He was not left to struggle for existence with canned milk and soured bottles. One part of the boy's discipline the young mother personally superintended—his diet. She fed him herself. Baby Burnaby knew his rights perfectly. He was already aware that no part of his father's grand house was too good for him to visit in his nurse's arms. He went about considerably, even drove in the Park and saw life, though he was only four months old.

In an evil hour, Rawson turned his attention to half a dozen small brokers whom he had previously befriended, and ruined them "just for fun." They hardly seemed worth the trouble, but Rawson had become reckless since the day he gazed at poor Dobell's

dead face in his coffin. He sometimes fancied also that he heard the appeal for "On'y a mil-le-on!"

Among these latest sufferers was Samuel Catesberry. Rawson quietly dropped the hint to him one day that there was a "corner" in the stock of the Juan Fernandez Steamship Company, and that it would double in price in a week. Catesberry and his friends bought all they could at par, and saw it drop to thirty cents on the dollar without a buyer in sight.

Catesberry heard Rawson laugh one morning as he passed his door. He was vain enough to believe himself the object of the sneer. He became a spy on Walter Rawson. For weeks he listened and watched. His patience was rewarded. A trifling incident paved the way to an acquaintance with Rawson's private telegraph operator. Catesberry followed the young man about for days until an opportunity occurred to ask him to drink. In half an hour he had made the fellow drunk, and had gained the secret of the special private wire that tied Rawson to a richer, brainier man than he. But who was that man? Whither did the wire lead? The poor slave couldn't tell. Rawson alone knew that. Probably a combination of men, for the word "we" was often used. Did Rawson heed the advice that reached him by this channel? Yes, indeed. He owed many of his boldest inspirations to the unknown power at the other end of the wire. Some of the suggestions were so malicious, so full of craftiness, that he, the telegraphist, often thought they came direct from the devil. Was the person, or persons, far

away? Not far. He had tested for distance, and the ground end of the wire was not over fifty miles away. Catesberry asked to have named an instance of the malicious inspiration. Could the telegraph operator do so? Certainly. Only a short time ago the mysterious unknown had sent the following:

"Arrange to have half the money General Moribund wants offered him at low interest. Take a mortgage on his house for security. Then look to it that he puts every dollar he gets into Juan Fernandez."

This was then another part of the same infamous trap in which he (Catesberry) had been caught.

Poor Moribund! A call loan offered at advantageous terms to take advantage of which a mortgage had been given; the money, directed into a channel foredoomed to loss, gone; the loan suddenly called, and the financial ruin of a professional hero was achieved!

Were there many such cases? Yes, hundreds.

How well did Catesberry nurse his man that day, recalling, and turning to account, his own experience with the genial William Gilroy. But the poor telegraph operator finally became so stupid with drink that he could not talk and had to be got to bed at an uptown hotel. When he awoke in the morning and realized what he had done, his fidelity for Rawson reasserted itself, and, in his shame and remorse, he blew out his brains.

This rash act gave Rawson quite a shock, especially as he could not divine the motive, and was always superstitious about unexpected events. He had con-

siderable trouble in filling the dead man's place; so, taking an expert instructor, he gave his evenings for three months to the art of telegraphy. At the end of that time he could slowly send and receive a message with accuracy. This fact gave him considerable confidence as it rendered him more or less independent of a third person.

Catesberry nursed his secret with jealous rage. One day he met Rawson in the hallway of his building, and, before the King of Wall Street was aware of the other man's presence, Catesberry had hurled him out of an open window. Fortunately, there was a strong awning underneath, down which Rawson rolled to the ground, uninjured.

But, so great was the scandal, that in an hour's time Catesberry found himself the head and the hero of an unorganized anti-Rawson faction. He clutched the floating wreckage of sentiment, and with astute discrimination as to his confidants, gathered in his room several days later a few of the boldest of Rawson's enemies. None was admitted to the circle unless he was smarting under a sense of personal injury done him by Rawson.

Catesberry unsealed his lips:

"Gentlemen, our revenge is within reach. This man Rawson is vulnerable! We can break him."

"The only way we can ever 'break' him is to kill him," said Wilder Joy, whose pale lips still shivered with the chill he felt in his heart when he awoke in the baggage car on the Hudson River Railroad, and found

himself deserted. His grievance, to his mind, was deeper than anybody's.

"No; we can strike him living," continued Catesberry. "I have discovered something."

"What?" asked a young broker, named Dos Pasos, but universally known by the English equivalent—"Two Dollars."

"Something that means a fortune for each of us, if our common hatred unites us," rejoined Catesberry, calmly, still master of the occasion.

"Not another of Rawson's 'points,' I hope?" suggested Gunwale, coldly.

"No, a secret; a momentous secret, which I can disclose."

"Hush!"—from everybody. Rawson's familiar step passed along the hall, outside.

"I have discovered this," began Catesberry, waiting for the full effect on his hearers; "Walter Rawson has somebody behind him in his venturesome career. It may be a skeleton, or the—devil. But, he is not alone. He is no longer an individuality. He is in constant communication, by private wire, with some more desperate man, or men, than he. I believe him to be only the agent of some gigantic cabal that wants to own the earth."

The effect produced by these words was astounding. Every man held his breath. Then each person rose, instinctively, and made sure that the secret had not escaped beyond the circle. Some looked into the wardrobe, others under the table, and Wilder Joy un-

locked and opened the office door to see that nobody was listening in the hall. Evidently the secret was their's alone. Old Gunwale was the first to find his tongue, and he said:

"I'm ready for anything now, so it hits him hard."

"What I am about to propose," resumed Catesberry, "is a war on Rawson, making use of his own weapons. But, first we must know our enemy. We cannot fight in the dark. Therefore, I recommend the selection of a committee of three from our number to conduct the campaign; and, secondly, the formation of a purse with which to hire and pay an expert lineman to find out who is at the other end of the accursed private wire. Knowing that, it will be a very easy matter for us to decide how to act."

"Catesberry's words seem very wise to me," admitted Gunwale, frankly.

"I say $2,000 each for a working capital," suggested Belwar, who hadn't spoken before. "I think we ought all to subscribe to a pledge of secrecy, in addition."

The old broker, Gunwale, who had been among the first to come to Catesberry's support, stepped to the center of the room, and, in a trice, resolved this informal conference of twelve revengeful men into a deliberate body. He named Wilder Joy secretary, probably because he had served the hated Rawson in the same capacity. Gunwale's request for the further pleasure of the meeting called forth a motion that the special committee of three be chosen by ballot. Cates-

berry suggested that the votes be counted in confidence by the presiding officer, and that the result be communicated only to the three persons selected—the ballots to continue until the committee was filled. This was agreed to promptly.

A check-book was produced and the assessment was paid on the spot, the checks being drawn to the chairman's order.

The first ballot resulted in the selection of the committee, for the chairman soon emerged from an inner office with a packet of sealed envelopes. Gunwale then said:

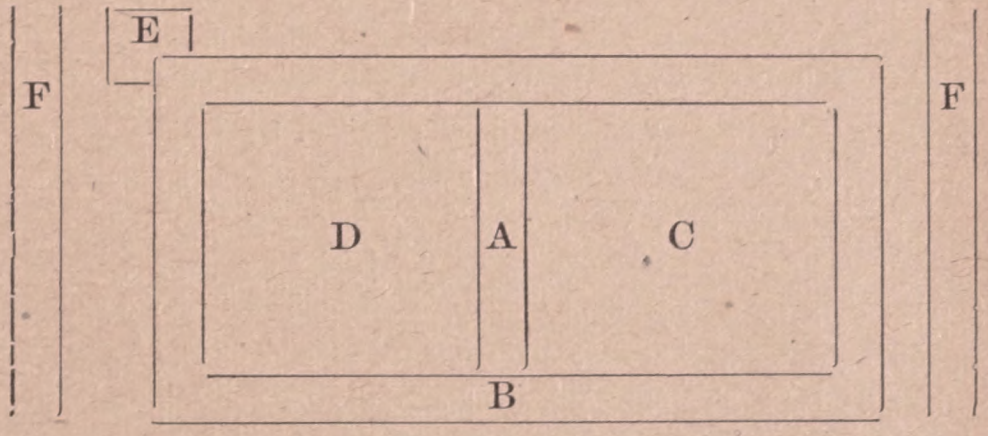
"There has been a very sensible wish expressed here that the identity of this committee's membership should for the present remain unknown to the subscribers. There are many reasons for this course—reasons which it does not need a lawyer to explain. I have, therefore, prepared with my own hands twelve letters exactly similar in external appearance. Those who find only a sheet of white paper in their envelopes will rest content that they have escaped a disagreeable and responsible duty. The three men whom your votes have selected will find the fact so stated in their envelopes, together with the hour and place of their meeting. There they will know each other for the first time. When I was a young man I belonged to a club, whose favorite amusement was a game known as 'Follow your leader!' It developed many a strange adventure. Recollection of those days has, perhaps, suggested the locality chosen for the first

meeting of the committee. The chief aim is absolute secrecy, and it does not seem amiss to test the courage of the heroes in this enterprise. I request that nobody will open his envelope until he is absolutely alone."

Some of the young brokers who were disposed to regard this mystery as absurd saw that the old chairman was thoroughly serious, and a further word from him as to the legal responsibilities of such a conspiracy rendered them equally solemn.

Catesberry went home. There he broke the seal to his envelope, and read the following:

To-morrow night; 10 o'clock, sharp, at the middle of the dividing wall of the lower Croton reservoir, Central Park. No moon. Study this diagram, and be careful:



A—Point in the division wall where you are to meet—about ten feet wide.

B—Side, from which the division wall can be reached most readily.

C D—North and south sections of the old Croton reservoir respectively.

E—Gatehouse and observatory.

F—Transverse roads through the Park.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHY "THE THREE" NEVER MET.

CATESBERRY entered Central Park by the Seventy-second Street gate on Fifth Avenue. He was anxious to be promptly at the meeting-place. The night was very dark, and the roads were icy in places. With some difficulty Catesberry mounted the slope to the reservoir near the point at which the Egyptian obelisk now stands. All the trees except the pines and cedars were bare of foliage, and the conspirator, from the elevation at which he stood, could overlook the town. To the northward and before him lay the artificial sea from which only a low fence separated him. Its waters were of inky blackness, and across it the biting, frosty air blew briskly. His ear could detect waves as they dashed against the revetment of masonry at his feet.

With considerable trepidation, owing to the darkness, Catesberry scaled the paling fence, and made his way toward the division wall. To his surprise, he found it readily distinguishable from the watery waste it divided. The wall appeared almost gray by contrast with the ink-like pond. He began, slowly, to walk out on this partition-wall, conscious that a misstep would probably cost him his life.

What a weird place for such a meeting! It was in

keeping with the mystery that Catesberry had sworn to penetrate. The night's vigil resembled a scheme hatched by the Wizard of Wall Street to get his enemies where they could be disposed of with ease.

Like all dishonest persons, Catesberry was suspicious even of his co-conspirators, and his quick instinct ascribed the choice of such an unheard of locality for the place of recognition to the influence of the common enemy of mankind. As he cautiously felt his way along the top of the narrow sod-covered wall, Catesberry drew a large revolver from his pocket and ran his fingers hastily over the ends of the bullets in the chamber to reassure himself that the cartridges were all in place. No railing protected the walker! Once in the water, all hope of rescue would be unreasonable. To scale the steep, stony rampart would be impossible. Catesberry recalled the death of a watchman during a previous winter. The man had drowned just below the point at which Catesberry now stood, after frantic efforts to save himself by climbing the escarpment. When the man's body was found the ends of the fingers were so worn off that the bones protruded. Then Catesberry thought of being drawn into one of the great water mains that form the arterial system of the throbbing city. He recalled a Sunday afternoon's visit to Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, many years before. In the act of crossing the bridge that connects the pumping works with the mainland, he saw a child spring from a woman's arms over the rail into the forebay. He recollected how, without a second thought,

he sprang into the water. Clutching the infant, he regained the surface to find himself in the embrace of a current that drew him irresistibly toward the iron tunnel carrying the water to the turbines. Death—to be ground to pieces among the cog-wheels! That was all he remembered, but when he regained consciousness in a hospital he was told that only the prompt action of an engineer in closing the water-gate had saved him from horrible agony.

Catesberry shuddered anew. Why had he recalled this experience at such a moment? He felt again the clinging, lapping, liquid embrace, the swaying and churning of the whirlpools, the resolute suction from below, firm, though pliant as the octopus' grasp. He heard anew the grinding of the wheels, he saw the phosphorescence in the water before him! What was that new sound?

It came from the surface of the pond, and—yes, he was certain—was the rowing of a boat! Catesberry strained his eyes to the northward, whence the noise came, but nothing was visible. He thought a moment. There was a flat-bottomed craft on the reservoir, into which the drift-wood and leaves were skimmed by the workmen. But what could the guards be doing at such an hour, in such a season? The boat was near at hand. Catesberry sat down on the frozen turf, for the phantom oarsman was bringing his craft to the wall at his feet!

The bow of the boat crashed against the stones. It contained only one man, who carefully took in the oars

and then climbed forward. He groped for something at the bow, apparently the boat's painter, and looked about him carefully. Then he coughed, as if to attract attention. Catesberry remained silent. The stranger then drew the boat close to the wall, and by a powerful spring landed within a few feet of where Catesberry sat. He had only to say, "I 'm the first man here," when his voice informed the watcher that Wilder Joy stood before him. Catesberry rose and said promptly:

"No; the second."

The two men shook hands, though both trembled so that they could hardly keep hold of each others' fingers.

"I make a very poor conspirator," said Joy. "But I took the trouble to look this place over this afternoon, and I saw clearly that I never could walk that long 'gangway' in the dark. I observed this scow fastened to the wall at the north end, and the happy idea occurred to me of coming across in it. But I don't want to do it again. There are such strange currents and eddies in that pool of black water—great vortexes that lead the way to underground mains. Ugh! They made my flesh creep."

"It was a clever way to come."

"Oh, I was bound to be here. Isn't there any sign of the third man?"

"He has probably backed out," suggested Catesberry. "It 's quite as well. This is not a weak-kneed man's work."

"Had he been imposed on as I was, his heart would

never fail him," said Wilder Joy, with a deep sense of injured innocence.

"Come, put your broken heart into this work. We shall have not only 'a tooth for a tooth,' but his whole jaw-bone."

"That suits me."

"I have a plan which we, as a majority of the committee, can adopt," continued the crafty Catesberry.

"It must be radical—now, I tell you that."

"Radical? Listen. We must tap the wire over which Rawson receives his instructions, and have a loop carried into a room along the route, known only to us. We can then have a 'put' or 'call' on him all the time. We can capture a million apiece, then——"

"Then we 'll retire."

"We are certain of success," said Catesberry.

"But I 'm not so sanguine."

"You mean you can't trust me?"

"I don't believe in anybody, hardly in myself, any longer," was the reply. "And besides, how are we to find a workman that can be trusted? We would be sold out to Rawson within an hour. You know it. The scheme is absurd, after all. I still adhere to a plan of my own, which is——"

"But," said Catesberry, firmly, his whole manner changing, "you forget that there will be another, a third party to this conference. Now, taking cupidity as it runs, this man will join with me, leaving you out in the cold. Do you understand?"

"That is not desirable, I admit."

"Very well," retorted Catesberry, in a mollified tone. "Let us come to an understanding. We know each other, Joy"—he made a mental reservation for his companion's sake, and added the words, "or think we do"—"but we cannot tell who the third man may be. We can't name him, until he 'shows up.' Therefore, let us organize this committee in our own interests. The other fellow may control both of us."

"I'll join with you, Catesberry."

"I'm glad to hear you say it," as the two men's right hands groped for each other in the dark. "We can have a blind circuit put on, and nobody else to divide with. We can discuss your plan, whatever it may be, and, perhaps, we can use it also. In the few weeks necessary to run down our game we can make ourselves rich."

"You forget that I have very little money left," suggested Joy.

"But you can have the handling of the funds in this pool."

"I hadn't thought of that."

"You needn't hesitate to use it. We shall audit our own accounts, and, besides, there's no danger of loss."

Catesberry did not trust his companion, and was already appealing to his cupidity, in the hope that he would embezzle from the funds of the pool, so that he would be sure of him. He was also fearful that Joy might swallow his chiefly imaginary wrongs and go to

Rawson with the secret. Joy was the only man he distrusted.

Catesberry was inwardly rejoicing that the third conspirator did not appear when footsteps were heard in the direction of the western wall of the reservoir; then a splash, followed by a horrifying scream for help. Starting to their feet, the two men clutched each other by the arms. They recognized the voice, but one held the other from stirring. Again the cries:

"Save me, for God's sake! Help! H-e-l-p!"

Already the words grew fainter. The lost man was drifting toward the water gates!

It was dreadful to let anybody drown thus; but the danger of going to the rescue was evident. It comprehended the risk of arrest and trial for a dastardly murder. How could Catesberry and Joy rationally explain their presence in such a place at this hour of the night? Not so nice in his reasoning, or perhaps because his conscience was less seared, Wilder Joy made a move as if to go to the rescue, but Catesberry frantically restrained him with the admonition:

"Are you stark mad? He will certainly drown. You couldn't save him. How would you rebut the circumstantial evidence that his death was your act? Answer me!"

"But, it is Belwar."

"I know it. All the greater reason why you shouldn't go. A motive for Belwar's murder is already on record against you!"

"What do you say?"

"Have you forgotten the New England Bonds he hypothecated with you? And that they were forged? And that he denied the transaction? And that you had to take the loss? There would be your incentive to kill him! Already I see a light approaching from the tower. To try to help Belwar is sheer insanity for us."

"Still, it's horrible to let the man die."

"There are many worse things than death," was the solemn answer.

"But how are we to get away?" asked Joy, with the instinct of self-preservation.

"We must go as you came."

"Is there no other way?"

"None."

Once more, and for the last time, was heard the appeal for succor: "Save me! Help! H-e-l-p!" Then the wind changed, carrying the fainter gasps that succeeded in another direction.

Instead of these cries were now audible the commands of the trained watchmen.

"Break into the lodge, and bring the coil of rope at the side of the door. Quick, now! I'll go down the ladder, and may catch him."

Catesberry and Joy listened no longer. They slipped down into the boat, and pulled out upon the murky water, doubly terrifying now that a fellow-creature was drowning near by. In their desire to escape, they forgot the noise made by the oars, and pulled away with the sole thought of personal safety. They found the

landing-stairs with some difficulty, and left the boat adrift. The two men at once separated to go in opposite directions. Catesberry sprang down into the transverse road, and his companion hurried across a bridge toward the northward.

At the water-gate of the south reservoir, Belwar's body was found on the following morning. It was jammed between the ice-fenders. The newspapers drew a sad moral from his suicide, induced, as they declared, by his recent reverses. They referred to an act or two of generosity which he was alleged to have performed, and glossed over the shameful scandal with which his name had been connected.

The watchman and his assistant shook their heads mysteriously. The latter told of sounds of oars heard on the reservoir. He also mentioned the fact that the boat had been tied up at nightfall and found adrift in the morning. But these vague suspicions of foul play seemed unimportant to the coroner.

Belwar's death was suicide, according to the popular verdict. That hypothesis alone could account for his presence at the reservoir at night.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JUST THE MAN.

CATESBERRY emerged from the Central Park into Eighth Avenue. He dared not take a car, because he might be recognized and by some means connected with Belwar's death. He must walk home to Fort Washington. He made his way to the Boulevard, and two hours' brisk tramp brought him to his gate. Entering the house with a latch-key, he stepped into the sitting-room to quiet his nerves with a glass of brandy and a cigar before going to bed. The windows reaching to the floor opened upon a veranda. In the daylight this was the pleasantest apartment in the building, overlooking the Harlem valley.

The household was asleep. After taking a deep draught from the brandy-bottle, Catesberry threw himself on a sofa to meditate. That he might be wholly alone with his thoughts, he arose and turned out the gas, after which he lay down again to puzzle out the details of his scheme to grow rich by mastering Rawson's secret. He was anxious to find a man who could be trusted to run down the mysterious wire over which the precious information passed. Such persons were few, difficult to discover, and even more dangerous to confide in. It was essential that the man should be a

mechanic who understood the art of telegraphing. Catesberry also recognized that it would be impossible to prevent him from learning the real purpose for which his services were to be used. He pondered long and earnestly, and finally, overcome with fatigue, he fell into a doze.

A gust of cold air awakened the sleeper. He could hear one of the windows on the porch slowly raised. He vaguely saw, in the opaque outline of the opening a man about to enter the apartment. Reaching noiselessly under the sofa where he had placed his revolver, Catesberry "covered" the intruder fully, and then asked:

"What are you about there?"

"Can't you see?" was the rejoinder of the burglar, not moving a muscle of his body. "I am getting in the window."

"Do you want to have your head blown off?"

"That would be a serious loss to me."

"Strike a match!" commanded Catesberry.

"Stop a moment till I get one," was the answer, as the stranger made a movement to stoop under the partly raised window-sash.

"Hold on! You'll make a bad mistake if you try to go out."

"Don't let any accident happen."

"Then light the gas at once!"

The stranger struck a match, found the chandelier, and in an instant the room was aglow with light. He convinced himself that he was "covered" by arevolver,

for his acute ear had heard the weapon cocked before Catesberry spoke. It was evident that he hoped to escape by the door, or intended to overpower and disarm his captor. The entrapped burglar calmly proceeded to look about him ; then he sat down.

"I 'm rather glad you are a fellow of sense," continued Catesberry, lowering the muzzle of his pistol.

"You 're too cool for me."

"Who are you ?"

"I 'll tell you "—and having previously gathered his feet under him, he made a tremendous spring across the room and pinned Catesberry to the wall. Before he could raise his weapon the burglar had wrested it from his grasp, and said :

"Not a word or you die." Then he stepped back under the light and examined the revolver, muttering : "I 'm ashamed of myself for having been afraid of a thing like this." He placed it in his pocket, and drew a weapon of more sanguinary character. "I said I 'd tell you. I will. I used to be known as 'Sanguine Billy.' "

Catesberry had been completely dazed by the sudden turn affairs had taken, but when he heard that name he involuntarily sprang to his feet, pale as a corpse, and exclaimed :

"Not Billy Gilroy ?"

"Catesberry, as I'm a thief." The burglar's surprise was even greater than the broker's. He replaced the pistol in his pocket. Then, with ludicrous grimmaces of pain, Gilroy pulled off the false mustache

that covered his upper lip and mouth. He held out his hand and Catesberry shook it rather gingerly, though he felt greatly relieved at the complete solution of the difficulty.

"You must admit that this is a rather strange way to come into a man's house?"

"I always had odd freaks, you will remember, Sam."

The man's assurance was appalling to the broker who understood the position he occupied in Gilroy's mind.

"Help yourself to the brandy," said the host.

"You are thoughtful as ever."

"And what has happened since——" he could not complete the sentence. Gilroy respected the broker's delicate conscience and explained:

"Well, you see, honesty didn't pay after I gave up the chop-house business."

"Honesty was a good policy that time, surely."

"Indeed it was. I say, Sam, did you take out a patent on our method of balancing a bad set of books?"

Catesberry was silent for some minutes, during which Gilroy refilled and emptied his glass. The mind of the ex-cashier of the defunct Limestone bank was wandering far away from the present. He was suddenly recalled to the events of the hour by the sarcastic query:

"So you are not going to call the po-lice?"

"What do we want with them?"

"We've no use for the po-lice," and Gilroys face grinned all over.

Catesberry was suddenly possessed of an idea that seemed very opportune. His retrospection had finally reached the events in his career immediately preceding the sleep from which the entrance of the house-breaker had awakened him. He walked the floor a few minutes, then he said :

"Gilroy, I'm very glad you came."

"You are ?"

"I have use for you. Indeed, you're the man of a thousand."

"Thanks "—in a rather uncertain tone.

"It is an attractive and remunerative piece of work ; there's even a tinge of romance about it."

"How does it rate—easy, ticklish, or highly dangerous ?"

"No danger whatever, so far as I can see."

"To what class —— ?"

"Oh, the 'purely legitimate.' "

"Well, I'm out of an engagement, though I hardly hoped to make one in this fashion."

Catesberry fully unfolded his plan to Gilroy. He told him how Rawson—whose name was as familiar to the buglar's ears as to those of every honest man—had secret communication with some infernal scoundrel who suggested half the diabolical schemes he sprung in Wall Street. To sharpen Gilroy's interest, he told him that a purse had been raised to prosecute the search for this person, or clique, and that the price of

success in finding the other end of the wire would be $5,000.

"I'll intercept the messages, and I'll find the source from whence they come."

"Can it be done?" asked Catesberry.

"Nothing easier. I was once a lineman, and understand the Morse alphabet fully."

"How long ought it to take?"

"I ought to be able to run the wire down in a few days, if the grounding point is anywhere near."

"The sooner the better."

"How about expenses?"

"They'll be allowed."

"Then advance me $500, on account."

"I'll place it in your hands to-morrow noon, at the corner of Beaver Street and Bowling Green."

"That's satisfactory."

"Everything understood?"

"I'm to 'cut in' on that wire—after I've found it—and, secondly, to trace it to the end, so that you may know who is the power behind the enemy?"

"Precisely."

"I'm to do both?"

"One is quite as important as the other."

"All square then. Here's to success"—and Gilroy filled and swallowed a large glass of cognac.

"I have always wanted to ask you why you had that woman in the chop-house, next to the bank?"

"Woman? What woman?" exclaimed the much scandalized burglar.

"Why the one your neighbor saw alight at your door with her trunk—the one supposed to have been shot when the explosion occurred."

"How did you learn this?"

"A lady who lived across the street from you gave her testimony very fully on your career in the restaurant."

"There wasn't a woman in the house, all the cooking was done by 'the boys.' But, I thought it might appear suspicious that a man like me should live alone in a whole house. So, I had one of *our* partners arrive in woman's garb—he knew well how to wear it. Woman, indeed! I wouldn't have trusted one about the place." He mused for a minute, after which the genial burglar continued: "And the descent of the po-lice was due to a woman across the street? I had a very narrow escape."

"She testified that she sent her father to the station-house."

"Heavens, that I could marry her. Revenge has its charms, after all."

With this regret, so frankly expressed, Gilroy put on his hat, replaced the false mustache, and led the way to the front door. Catesberry saw him depart, and then went to bed.

Gilroy was, indeed, "just the man" for the task Catesberry had undertaken. His knowledge of electrical science was not slight. But his chief availability existed in the fact that he had no alliances with the great telegraph monopoly of which Rawson was the

directing genius. No servant of that corporation could have been trusted.

On the other hand, a previous experience with Gilroy had proved that his word could be implicitly relied on. Catesberry had secured his share of the plunder from the Limestone bank. This was in recognition of the value of the cashier's services, which, under the circumstances, were unquestionable. So thoroughly had Catesberry informed Gilroy regarding the precise location of each class of securities that every dollar's worth of convertable paper was taken and all the unnegotiable securities left. Had it been necessary to sort over all the drawers and boxes in the fireproof of the Limestone bank to secure the valuable plunder, Gilroy and all his gang would have been captured by Captain Churchill. It was with deep-seated feelings of mutual confidence, therefore, that these two rascals laid their heads together for this new enterprise.

It may have been that Gilroy had other thoughts when entering upon this work. It may have revived in his spare mind and not over-scrupulous conscience memories of a reasonably honest life and of wages that represented labor.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

TOO "SANGUINE" BY FAR.

THE more Gilroy pondered over Catesberry's scheme the more easy of accomplishment it appeared.

His first move was to rent a small unoccupied room at the rear of the fourth floor in the Broad Street building containing Rawson's offices. This was readily done by becoming an architect for the occasion and paying good Janitor Tidd a quarter's rent in advance. Into this office Gilroy moved two desks, a table, and a drawing-board. The walls were hung with several old maps, which he had purchased, with the furniture, at an auction-room. A small and modest sign on his door completed the fixtures. So frequently did his business call him into and out of the house that in a few days he was acquainted with the habits of every person in the building. He even obtained a look into Rawson's private office late one afternoon as the janitor was cleaning it.

On a small table, near a window looking out into a court, he saw a sounding instrument, but from a switch-board directly before it ran ten wires. These lines emerged from the room at the top of the window, and, as he subsequently discovered, ascended along the wall of an open court to a large fixture on the roof.

This was his starting point. First of all, however, he made sure that none of these wires operated the stock-telegraph machine by tracing the four wires therefrom into and out of the house by way of the front hall-door. A glance had shown him also that any one of these ten wires could be switched into or out of circuit. The next thing to be learned was how many were "dead" and how many "live" wires. This could only be ascertained by visiting the housetop, and he must achieve that feat without the knowledge of Janitor Tidd.

Gilroy walked down the block toward Beaver Street, and, making his way to the top of a house in the row, clambered over the roofs to Rawson's building."

Going directly to the large fixture from which all the wires radiated, his first act was to carefully mark each of the lines. He then tested for batteries in the hope of finding which wire was in use. Trying the first, he found it "live"—an electric current was passing on it. For an instant he congratulated himself that he had found what he wanted by sheer accident. Inadvertantly he applied his tongue to the second wire and found that it was in use likewise. Then he tried all the wires, and found every one of them "alive." Each line must be traced to its end.

Gilroy lost no time. He started at once with No. 1, which crossed to a high building on the corner below. Gilroy descended to the street, and after a heated discussion with a janitor's wife, reached the housetop. (Why was it, he wondered, that women were always

suspicious of him ?) He carefully examined the fixture to which the wire was fastened, and, to his amazement, found that the insulator which carried it was connected with another on the same beam by a covered wire, so neatly put in as to defy anything short of a careful scrutiny. Thence the wire returned directly to the top of the very building he had left—becoming No. 6. Going back to his own house and gaining the roof, by the hazardous means of a skeleton key which he had made to the attic-door, he found (what had escaped him on his first inspection) that this wire was neatly "grounded" on a lightning-rod.

The troops in Flanders would have stood aghast at his language. A whole working day had been wasted, and the status of only two wires had been settled.

The following morning he began earlier. Selecting wire No. 2, he followed it three miles up Broadway only to find that it came to an abrupt end. Do what he would, he couldn't find any "grounding" point, though he persevered for a week—climbing every pole along the route, directly before the eyes of several of "the finest policemen in the world," who had known and ought to have recognized the former proprietor of the Limestone restaurant.

A month's zealous labor resulted in tracing six of the remaining wires to various points. One went to an up-town hotel, and was "grounded" on a gas fixture at the front of a third-story balcony—what is called "a pony wire." After ten days' labor, another was traced to the Harlem river, where it entered a cable-box, into

which he could not penetrate. Search for this wire among those that emerged from the corresponding box on the Mott Haven side failed to discover it. Could it be that this was a loop line like that first detected? Still another wire ran to the main office of the United Uncle Sam Telegraph Company, and was represented by a peg and series of holes on the monster switch-board in the top story of the gigantic building owned by that corporation. Three of the wires communicated with other brokers' offices, and appeared to be very little used.

The tenth and last wire crossed to Brooklyn, only to double on itself and finally to end in a newspaper office. At the latter place Gilroy made the surprising discovery that the wire from Rawson's office to the Uncle Sam Telegraph building formed a loop, which, by the turning of a switch, could be made a part of any one of the main lines, over which the most confidential business communications were passing.

Bold burglar as Gilroy was, he was unprepared for this revelation. He comprehended the preparations that Rawson had made, and the fabulous resources at his command for fleecing the public. More than this, it showed him the difficult task the men had undertaken who set out to circumvent Rawson; yet it immeasurably increased his zest for the undertaking. There is pride in all trades. But, up to that hour, he had accomplished nothing—a circumstance which was greatly taxing the patience of his employers of the cabal. Gilroy grew desperate, and more resolute than

ever. He had not yet fingered the reward which he had been promised for his services, and the prospect of success did not seem altogether flattering.

Locking himself up in his office until the building had been closed for the day, Gilroy waited until the janitor's family had descended to the street to hold the regular evening levee on the front steps. Then, availing himself of his key to the attic, he again made his way to the roof, provided with a full kit of tools and a coil of fine, covered copper wire. There was no way out of the difficulty except to put loop-lines on each of the suspected wires.

It was a bright moonlight night, and Gilroy went to work with a will. Using a brace and bit he drilled a hole through the brick into a disused chimney that passed down the wall at one side of his room. With a pair of vises and tackle roven through double blocks, he took up the slack in the wires and each one was "cut out" of the down-stairs office. He made "a glass connection." The wire appeared to be properly lapped around the insulator, but, in reality, the two ends were separated by half an inch of glass. In thirty minutes' time his expert hands had inserted a loop of the fine, covered wire in each broken line. These wires he carried along the top of the large fixture in small staples, and down the upright beam in a deep groove which he furrowed out and filled with putty, colored like the paint on the wood. The bundle of small wires, all properly marked at the extremity of each loop, was then twisted into a cable, which was

hidden under the combing of the housetop and pushed into the chimney through the hole in the bricks until it reached below the level of his office floor.

This task occupied him all night; but when he contemplated his work in the early light of day Gilroy was satisfied that detection could only result from careful search. Descending noiselessly before the janitor was astir, the ends of the loops were brought into his room through an unused stove-hole, back of a desk. The interior of that imposing piece of furniture contained seven sound-instruments, all carefully muffled with chamois skin, and it was only the work of a few minutes to make the connections through the woodwork of the desk's back.

Gilroy was busily engaged when the door of his room was tried by some one outside. For a moment the future trembled in the balance. Gilroy was not sure that he had pushed the bolt.

The danger passed, however, for it was only careful old janitor Tidd making his early round. Gilroy knew that detection by the janitor would have meant exposure, for the old servant was entirely devoted to Rawson. Catesberry had told him that Rose's first boy was named Walter Rawson Cole, and that the child had the proceeds of a small "turn" in stocks standing to his credit in a saving's bank.

That day was a momentous one for the conspirators. It revealed to Gilroy (what the reader already knows) that the wire leading to Rawson's mysterious adviser was the one he had followed to the Harlem river, only

to lose all traces of it beyond. It was quite evident that this unknown, wherever existing, felt sure of absolute privacy, for very few cipher words were employed in the messages.

The long-sought means of getting riches was within his grasp, and Gilroy did not doubt that his employers would be fully satisfied with half a success that promised such rewards. Not an hour was lost in putting Catesberry and Joy in possession of the secret information. The success of the anti-Rawson cabal for nearly two months was marvellous. From small beginnings, nearly a hundred thousand dollars was accumulated by Catesberry and his confederate. The other parties to the conspiracy were clamorous to know the progress of the chase, but they were put off with misleading statements. The two custodians of the secret were unduly elated with their achievements. Their good fortune suddenly changed. They began to meet with reverses, though they followed "the wire's" advice. Adopting the gambler's trick of "doubling the stakes" after every loss, Catesberry and Joy boldly strove to recoup themselves. But disaster after disaster overtook them until all their available assets were exhausted. Not till then did they realize that they had been detected.

Cotton Mather was one afternoon perplexed at the way his relay worked. Without any definite suspicion, he got out the galvinometer to test the strength of the current. To his surprise, he found that there was an increased resistance of nearly 200 ohms, bringing the

total above 700 ohms. It did not occur to him, at first, that anybody had tapped the line. He ascribed the defect to some bad bit of insulation, and asked Rawson to have a man go over the wire.

This request, which Gilroy heard, gave the electrician of the conspirators a terrible fright, and he closed his office the following day that he might watch the line inspector. He soon saw that his fears were unduly great. The same workman who had originally run the wire was sent for. He did not bother to go to the top of Rawson's building, so certain was he that nothing could have gone amiss there. So, after Gilroy had followed him a few blocks, he returned to his room.

When the result of the inspection was reported to Cotton Mather he was not satisfied. Gilroy, boldly asking at what hour a galvinometer test would be made, "cut out" his relay during its progress, and for a few days the hermit forgot the incident. During that time one of the largest and most successful "scoops" was manipulated, greatly to the profit of Rawson and his "blind" partner, and, of course, the secret clan. One night it occurred to Cotton Mather to try an experiment. It could do no harm, and might settle his suspicions. He sat down and wrote a brief note to Walter Rawson, running as follows:

"After to-morrow (Tuesday) until the end of business on Saturday next use no code, but say exactly the opposite of what you intend to do. My orders and advice will be sent in the same manner. When I say,

'Sell,' you will read 'buy.' Messages that are not to be acted on at all will be preceded by the word 'advisable.' Send me early to-morrow the words, 'Fine weather to-day,' so that I may know the suggestion is accepted."

This letter was carried into town by the faithful Jacques, who took it to a district messenger office not far from Rawson's home. There he paid for its delivery, followed the boy to Rawson's doorstep, and then hastily made his way back to Tremont.

The reader already knows the result. Catesberry and Joy were on the wrong side of every great move in the stock market, and, of course, met with crushing disaster.

Unfortunately for Gilroy, he had not collected his bill for services during the days of success, and when he finally spoke to Catesberry about his promised fee and share of the spoils, it was on the heels of a staggering tumble in the very stocks that, acting on the secret information, the clan had bought for a rise. Nothing could have been more inopportune. Catesberry turned on his expert, almost white with rage, and shouted:

"You infamous whelp, I don't see that you have performed any services. Everything we have had from you for ten days has resulted in disaster. I don't believe you've got the wire at all."

"You forget, Catesberry, the successes of last month," said Gilroy, undaunted by what he regarded as a trick to cheapen his wage.

"It was my good luck, rather than your guessing."

"Guessing?"

"Yes. I believe you 've been deceiving us from first to last. You haven't run the wire down, as you said you would."

"I explained that," Gilroy rejoined, curtly.

"More lies, I suppose. It was because you didn't know how. I now insist on your doing that part of the job."

"But, Catesberry, I want my share of the winnings——"

"There isn't a dollar left. You 'll never get a cent from me until you find the infernal scoundrel at the other end of that wire. Curse him! I hate him worse than ever."

"Suppose I communicate with Rawson?" suggested Gilroy, in his most insulting manner, expecting to frighten Catesberry.

"Tell him, if you like. We have nothing to lose. My last cent's gone."

"It might be bad for you."

"There's no statute covering this business. But burglars go to jail, and I 'd denounce you as the Gilroy who robbed the Limestone bank. Look out for yourself."

"But I 'd also have something to tell."

"You were a convict before I met you, and no jury would believe a single word of your testimony," was Catesberry's quick retort.

Then you refuse?" asked Gilroy, ceasing to threaten,

"Yes; because you're a blind ass. Don't you see that Rawson has been fooling you, he and his infamous 'pal'; that they have been sending wrong messages to lead us astray; that you have betrayed yourself in some clumsy way, you idiot?" shouted Catesberry, forgetting, in his anger, that he was logically estopped from admitting that Gilroy had intercepted any messages.

"So I'm to get nothing?"

"Not a cent; yes, here's a quarter. Now, get out!" said Catesberry, in a contemptuous tone.

Gilroy almost staggered to the door, and, dizzy with rage, found his way to the sidewalk. His first impulse was to go to Rawson and tell him the secret; but, while he debated the wisdom of such a course in his mind, his feelings toward the Wizard underwent a radical change. Was not Rawson really to blame for the insults which had just been heaped upon him, for the loss of money and the want of success? After all, Catesberry was right, only a fool could have failed to suspect and foresee trickery! Nothing else was to have been anticipated.

This made the desperate man more savage than before, and Catesberry was overlooked in a burst of new wrath. He gave to Rawson the entire credit of outwitting and humiliating him. Thus was raised up against Rawson the most implacable and dangerous of all his foes in the person of a man whom the reckless financier never had seen, and of whose existence, even, he was ignorant.

Gilroy wandered about the streets, moody and antagonistic. At nightfall he sought his lodgings, and, supperless, went to bed.

Hour after hour, he tossed about muttering imprecations upon Rawson's head.

When daylight at last appeared, it revealed the few articles which lay scattered about the room. The first objects he recognized were his pair of "climbers"—the steel applianccs fastened to the boots of the linemen, by the aid of which they ascend the telegraph poles. He had an inspiration. He'd kill Rawson!

In his trip along the wire to Harlem, he had encountered a pole in Madison Square, on which an electric light cable crossed only a few inches above the line that tied Rawson to his other self. He knew the place exactly, and, dressed as a lineman, he could readily gain access to the fixture on top. Once there, he could cut off the wrapping of the electric light conduit, call up his victim, and then, by bringing the two wires in contact, finish him at a blow.

This didn't seem like murder, because detection was impossible.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TRUE TO THEIR PROMISES.

"Men's evil manners live in brass,
Their virtues we write in water."
—*Henry VIII. iv. 2.*

Poor old Cotton tried to feel that he ought not to be so wretched and unhappy. He had only one step yet to take to secure his long-cherished revenge—the publication of the list of corrupted United States Senators and Congressmen. Everything was prepared, even to an engraved fac-simile of each man's signature—as it stood on the back of his check.

A complete history of the conception, rise and purpose of the National Improvement Company was already in type, and the blow was only delayed until arrangements could be made to have Walter Rawson interviewed by *The Typhoon*, a most respectable journal published for the very best people, and in no wise identified with him. In that projected conversation, which had been carefully contemplated in all its features, Rawson was to wipe away every breath of suspicion connecting him with the Mississippi infamy. He would cite the oft-repeated warnings given to his personal friends, the very admonition that had sufficed to make everybody greedy for the scrip.

Rawson's character was to be entirely reburnished at the expense of the missing Cotton Mather. The blow given the professional politician was to be cruel and pitiless. No mercy; no pardon! Anything and everything was to be resorted to that would make universal a popular recognition of Congressional improbity, faithlessness, disloyalty, dishonesty, shabbiness, meanness, baseness, abjection, turpitude, knavery, and roguery. The victims of this vengeance were to be made to fully feel their disgrace, ignominy, infamy, degradation, perfidiousness, perjury and double dealing. From among the untainted statesmen, the avenger had selected the names of twenty who were to be appointed on special committees of investigation which he would force the Speaker to create at the direction of resolutions which he would find means to compel the craven members to pass. He'd be present at the sessions of the Committees—suddenly restored to life to confront the ingrates. Ah! he'd put their names into the pages of history! His taunts would strike home every time! He'd hoot, ridicule, and reproach them! How he'd turn them off with a wave of his hand when they approached to sue for pity—for oblivion! He drew out his notebook, and conned over the list. There were all the names of the doomed, set down in alphabetical order, with the date of their fall. This man he'd tattoo in letters of scarlet, for he was a hypocrite; for another he'd order the knout in the committee room; the next he'd bastinado in his Congressional district amid the peacefulness of his home

and constituents—where he only needed to be exposed to be despised—and so on to the end of the roll of the lost ones.

Never was hour more opportune. There had suddenly burst upon the nation a revival of honesty—an epidemic that spread like the passion of the Crusades. The tingle of the bell-punch was no longer heard in the cars upon the streets; clerks in the shops made change for customers out of their own pockets. Burnaby, with the magic and unpurchasable influence of the mighty *Cyclone* at his back, led it. He unmasked, with the ambidexterity of the surgeon, corruption in society, malfeasance in public office, and embezzlement in trade; he branded one institution as "The Bank of the Suicides," because its cashiers always robbed it and then took their lives; he unfrocked false shepherds who strove to lead their flocks from the pastures of orthodoxy to the stony wastes of agnosticism; he tore out a dozen alleged charities, and drove the ghouls who fattened on children's forfeited lives to prison or to exile.

"Ha, ha!" chuckled Cotton, rubbing his hands till they blistered. "Burnaby's a valuable ally. He serves my purpose well, however unconscious a slave of my vengeance he may be. I'm very glad he did not sell us *The Cyclone*. We couldn't have managed it half so well. He will be on my side the moment the blow falls. He can't avoid it."

But, that the agitation might last and the storm not spend itself too soon, one of the journals of "the Blind

Pool" would openly defend the course of the subsidized Congressmen, while the other pressed the attack with all possible bitterness and keenness.

And yet, though the trap was ready, Cotton actually began to doubt whether this revenge would satisfy him. He felt the social desolation which he had courted, as he had not when he first immured himself. Then, too, his disease made slower progress than he had anticipated. Six years had passed since he had believed himself to be attacked with the mah-fung, since he had forsaken his identity and had curled himself in his lair, like a wounded panther, to await Death. After all, his judgment about the Mississippi improvement had been the correct one. Time and events had shown Rawson that it was only created as a vehicle for moral regeneration by fire. The bodies of the rotten three hundred must go into the crematory of public opinion. Never was such bitterness as his seen in this world! Only one active spot remained in his heart, and that throbbed with hatred.

"And, why not?" he often asked, to reassure and strengthen himself. "What reward had devotion to virtue, duty and justice secured him? The first fifty years of a blameless life had brought a heritage of woe, of misery.

From a purely ethical point of view, nothing could have been more pitiful than the picture of this deserted old man as he sat in his room one summer day and contemplated the final catastrophe in his career. He was an image of despair, of loneliness. One mental

gratification that had solaced him for years was gradually ebbing away. He clung to the ravelling shreds of a contentment which he had cherished on account of the terrible disease that enforced and emphasized his misanthropy.

'Tis very curious that, after the first shock of terror is overcome, there seems to be a peculiar satisfaction to the human mind in knowing that one has a deadly and incurable malady. It is, perhaps, ascribable to latent traits of vanity so peculiar as to require circumstances of this nature to develop them—the morbid feeling that the visage of Death is already known to us alone of all living men, and the hour of his visit approximately fixed.

For Mootla, curiously enough, Cotton's heart had undergone a decided change. He had not seen her for six years, and he now recalled her as the living evidence of his first great humiliation. Happily married, he often rejoiced in a hope, almost as strong as belief, that his once beloved ward had forgotten him utterly. He had intended that part of the immense fortune which he and his confederate had amassed should go to Mootla; but he now felt an unaccountable indifference on the subject. He actually argued with himself, at times, that the capital of "the Blind Pool" was indivisible and belonged solely to the survivor at the death of one of the partners. It was just as well, for Burnaby would not have permitted his wife to receive money accumulated as this had been.

Cotton's estimate of Mootla was as unfair and unjust

as that which he made of many other people. She had not forgotten him for an hour ; memories of her happy childhood were never absent, and in them he always held a place. She was wont to sit in the seclusion of her music room at times and go over the bright melodies that, in girloood, she had sung for "dear Uncle Cotton." She sincerely believed him dead, and had mourned him in her heart of hearts. Burnaby, despite the activity of his life, gave Mootla a true man's love. He wasted no time in sentiment, but honored, humored and cheered the mother of his children.

Still, of all these truths Cotton was ignorant, and it is doubtful if a knowledge of them would have made him less unhappy. If he lived a year longer, he would be content. That time would be ample for all his purposes. Only a few hours, or days, of patience and he would tear off the mask that covered without disguising the rottenness of national legislation. By united efforts, he and his confederate had crushed the political estate.

Rawson had reduced nine-tenths of the commercial nabobs and land-grabbers to penury. The professional hero had become such an outcast that he had retired into his natural obscurity, and only existed with the aid of undeserved pension money, voted to him by his fellow conspirators in Congress. The professional politician was completely in the toils, and the executioner was grinding his knife. Only a few days more and the bloody business would begin.

Cotton sat in his room enjoying these thoughts when

a call was heard on the sounding instrument. He listened. It was his signal for Walter. There must be some mistake. He waited. It was repeated. He would answer the call in Walter's name; he would find out what was wanted. Stepping to the table he opened his key and answered, in doing which his hand carelessly slipped from the button to the brass lever.

A flash of unholy light filled the room and a shock followed, like the snapping of an iron bolt!

The old man gasped and fell back upon the floor, face upward.

Over all, the silence of death.

The only living creature in the house, the deformed valet, slumbered peacefully in a great chair on a shady part of the porch. He heard nothing. The sunshine on the broad road, outside the yard, and the shadows under the spreading maples within, showed no change. Nature is indifferent to the sorrows of man.

When Jacques carried supper to the invalid he found a corpse.

Without any manifestation of consternation, the hunchback set down the dishes on the nearest table and hobbled away to the Tremont police-station as fast as his crooked legs would carry him. There he reported the death of his master as well as his limited English vocabulary permitted. On the way back to the lonely house, he lay down at the side of the road and bemoaned the miserable fate that cast him again on a friendless world.

Show me a heart that has no trace of selfishness! Up to that moment, Jacques' record had been without blemish.

The coroner's inquest on the following morning disclosed the cause of death, without clearing up the mystery that surrounded it. The body was buried in a small cemetery on the brow of a neighboring hill overlooking the city of New York—that populous hive wherein are countless atoms of humanity with ghastly secrets in their keeping. There, his name shortened to an interrogation point, rests the once famous and feared Cotton Mather, *alias* Rawson. His grave is unmarked, and the stranger will search for it in vain.

Among the effects of the deceased recluse was found an attested certificate, a very impressive-looking document. It was in French. The wretched man had died without knowing its contents. He never had had it interpreted, either because he dared not trust anybody with his horrible secret or feared to have his dreadful belief confirmed. Translated, the paper read thus:

"Result of a consultation held at the Hospital of Staint Louis, Paris:

"This certifies that we have carefully examined patient Number 17,062 (nativity, United States of America; age 70 years), and find that he has no organic disease. There are no traces of leprosy in any form. Some slight discolorations of his skin are probably due to trifling derangement of the liver; but, generally speaking, there is nothing wrong in his physical condi-

tion. He is only a hypochondriac (*Il n'est qu'un malade imaginaire*).

"FELIX ARNHOLDT, L'Hopital de Saint Louis;
"ALEX. BLAUVELT, L'Hotel Dieu;
"HENRI CONSTANT, L'Hopital de Saint Denis."

The dead man's secret was never known to the world until now. Workmen who were digging a foundation for a turntable on the New York and Northern Railroad unearthed a piece of his underground cable.

The newspapers of the day following the unknown recluse's death contained an account of a distressing accident on Broadway. At the hour when pedestrians were thickest on that great promenade, a man engaged in repairing the wires at the top of a tall telegraph pole was seen to throw up his hands, and an instant later fell to the pavement, a corpse. The body lay at the Morgue the usual time, then went to the Potters' Field. Gilroy had made his words good. He had killed somebody—himself. Rawson had escaped. True to his promise, Mather had stepped between him and retribution.

Subsequent investigation by a lineman showed that a temporary telegraph office had been opened at the top of the pole. A small pocket sounding instrument and key, used by line repairers, was found fastened to one of the cross-bars with a thumb-screw. The man apparently had been testing a wire when he had carelessly laid his hand on the exposed surface of an electric cable supplying light for the cellars of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, and thus brought it into contact with the wire

on which he was at work. The expert declared that the current thus suddenly switched upon the telegraph line, through the arms of the man who was tampering with the wires, equalled 1,800 volts—enough to kill a hundred people.

The private wire to Rawson's house never worked again. No response came to the summonses which the broker repeatedly sent. Cotton had disappeared as mysteriously as he had returned from the dead.

This fact affected Walter Rawson greatly. In the language of his rivals, the King of Wall Street "lost his grip." He became nervous and despondent. He forsook speculation and turned philanthropist. He began the erection of great retreats for socially ostracised ex-Congressmen, comfortable hospitals to which they could retire and never again read a newspaper or see the face of a fellow-mortal. He took Hampton Court for a model, and provided a home for indigent professional heroes, offering a bounty for them to write histories of their actual or imaginary battles. He gave $10,000 to every county in the United States to be applied to improving the condition of its almshouse. He only retained a million of his countless wealth. He settled at a pretty little nook on Long Island Sound to end his days, living on $5,000 a year and dispensing the rest of his income among the needy. His career, with all its successes, had been a failure, because it lacked an essential element—happiness.

[THE END.]

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